

MC:SM Rewritten: Book 1 (Order of the Stone)

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Nikki is a 14-year-old, adventure-loving, kickbutt young teen. She and her older brother, Jesse, have been there for each other ever since the accident that killed their parents, Steve and Alex. But when a simple shady deal alongside their old friend, Petra, goes wrong, one problem leads to another, and the siblings find themselves on the same whirlwind adventure we know today. Join the ride with Nikki and company as they cruise through hair-raising adventures, several kismet romances, and even the return of a mysterious relic of the Old Builders that was thought to be lost long ago.

This is Book 1, where Nikki goes to her first EnderCon, meets some new friends, and begins her tough journey as a little hero! With the help of her older brother and their friends, Nikki begins to learn that the biggest of heroes come in the smallest of packages.

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Prologue

You know the story. The Minecraft story, that is. About the journey Jesse and his friends made to stop the Wither Storm and save the world. But was that all there was to it? Close your eyes. Transport yourself back to the beginning of the story. Back to the treehouse the gang started out in. What do you see? Just the original characters, right? Now imagine something else there. Or, perhaps...someone. That someone is Nikki. You probably don't know about her. Mostly because you think she doesn't exist. Here, she does. This is the story with her inside. This is their story. This is Minecraft Story Mode: Rewritten.

epicness intensifies



Chapter 1: Treehouse Trouble

Is it true? Can it be? It is! MC:SM REWRITTEN! Congratulations, everybody! Your patience has prevailed! Here is Chapter 1 of my Rewritten series! And prepare to have the adventure of your life!

Nikki's POV

"Nikki...Nikki! Hey, wake up, sis! We're almost ready to go!" Nikki's eyes flickered open. She saw a young man with brown hair and green eyes, as well as wearing white overalls with red suspenders and jeans staring back at her. It was Jesse, her older brother.

Looking around the treehouse shack in which they lived, which consisted of a few banners hanging on the oak wood plank wall; two chests, one on either side of the room; a crafting bench; and a furnace, Nikki couldn't see what was worth waking up for.

"Urugh...Jesse, go away...let me sleep..." she moaned, rolling away from him. "What is it almost time for anyways? I'm sure it can wait."

A girl with pigtails and a workers outfit answered for him. "I'm pretty sure the building competition starts in an hour, kiddo," said Olivia, Jesse's friend.



"Except for that!" yelled Nikki, pouncing out of bed, where she could now be fully seen. The small 14-year-old had chestnut brown hair like Jesse's, a small nose, solid sky-blue eyes, wore jeggings and a grey hoodie, and was extremely skinny. As she jolted forward, she tripped over something.

"Ooof!" grunted Nikki, colliding with the floor hard.

"Oink, oiiiiink!" squealed a surprised pig.

"Whoops! Sorry Reuben," she apologized sheepishly.

Jesse's POV

"Well, that's a...interesting way to get up in the morning," commented Jesse, struggling to hide his laugh as he watched his younger sister squirm on the floor.

"Oh, is it now?" Nikki retorted, getting to her feet. "I thought numero uno was when Axel squished you when we went on that camping trip last year." Both the girls laughed as Jesse felt his face burn.

"Hey, that baby zombie came out of nowhere! How was I supposed to know they're still dangerous at dawn?!" he snapped.

"The zombie I can excuse, but the chicken?! Ha! It chased you all the way to the river! You still have that scar on your face!"

"I thought the baby zombie was on it! They can do that, you know."

Jesse stormed over to a training dummy with his wooden sword. Even though the memory was embarrassing to him, he had to smile. His little sister never forgot the greatest moments they and their friends had been through.

"While we're on the subject of chickens and zombies, which would you rather fight?" asked Olivia. "Chicken-sized zombies, or zombie-sized chickens? Just to be clear, you wouldn't have any weapons or armor." Jesse thought about it for a moment. He turned to Nikki, who only shrugged.

"I'd have to go with the zombie-sized chickens. Not because I want to, or because it's easy, but because they would be an abomination," he answered.

"*Pffft*, yeah," agreed Nikki. "Imagine their giant feet."

"Like I said, sis: an abomination," said Jesse.

Olivia's POV

"Soooooooo...I've got a daylight sensor on the roof, now," mentioned Olivia, to which Jesse and Nikki only "mmm-hmm'ed" in reply. "And if I get this right," she continued, "then these lamps should turn on when it gets dark." Olivia nodded towards a few redstone lamps in the corner. Another "mmm-hmm" from the both of them, again. Getting a little annoyed at this point, she decided to say something a little more noticeable to them. "I didn't just want to leave Reuben here with nothing while we're at the building competition." That got their attention.

"He's coming with us," Jesse said, matter-of-factly.

"Not exactly what I had in mind," Olivia thought to herself. "Really?" she pondered aloud.

"What kind of question is that?! Of course he is," Nikki piped up from the wall she had been leaning against.

"Okay, I'm not saying he shouldn't...I'm not!" Olivia assured defensively. "But don't you two think that it's a little weird that you take him with you everywhere you go? He kind of makes us look like...amateurs." She hesitated as Reuben climbed on top of a small chest to look out the window.



"Reuben's our best friend," Jesse said to her. She found this offensive.

"I thought I was your best friend," she replied.

"Both of you are!" Nikki stated firmly. "We're all the best of friends, and that's all there is to it."

Olivia turned to Nikki, seeping in the wisdom of her words. Her harsh gaze softened.

"I didn't mean anything by it," she soothed. "I'm glad he's coming." At this, all three smiled.

Axel's POV

"Yah, yah! Back evil creature!" Axel shouted at the hissing creeper advancing on him. He had just been picking up some fireworks for his friends for the building competition, but had been unfortunate enough to run into an explosive creeper on the way back. He swung his wooden sword at the long green mob, breaking the last of it.



"Ah, crap!" He cursed, dropping the now useless weapon. He gave a final last resort punch-and the monster evaporated into white mist, leaving behind some gunpowder, and a creeper head. "No way!" he said to himself. "Mob heads are so rare! But what should I do with it?" Axel was still thinking about what to do with the head as he walked back to the treehouse when he heard Jesse, Nikki, and Olivia talking. Then he got a nasty idea. He put on the creeper head and climbed up the ladder.

As Axel neared the entrance, he caught a few words from Olivia. "I just don't want to give people another reason to call us losers," she seemed to be worrying.

"Losers?" wondered Axel. *"Why would anyone call us that?"* He kept on listening.

"I'm getting tired of it," she continued. "Of being a laughingstock." Axel let her words sink in, feeling a spark of anger inside him.

"Who cares what they think?" Jesse spoke now.

"I know," Olivia interrupted. "I'm just...it wears you down." Axel sat there for a bit, knowing what Olivia said must be true...whatever it was.

"You say you're not a loser, Olivia, so win," advised Nikki from inside.

"Oh well," his mind told him. *"No time to worry about what's happening now. You got a prank to pull!"* So Axel started hissing like a creeper.

"Do you hear that?" whispered Jesse fearfully.

"It's working!" he thought excitedly. He hissed again.

"Oh no..." said Olivia in a shaken voice.

"And now, we scare," Axel said to himself. So he popped his head through the trapdoor, and-

Nikki's POV

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH!!!!!" Nikki screeched fearfully as a creeper's head burst through the trapdoor! Reuben oinked in terror and fell off the small chest he'd been standing on.

"Ha ha ha!" the creeper laughed.

"Waiiiit a minute...creepers don't laugh," thought Nikki. *"It better not be who I think it is."* But it was. The "creeper", took off its head to reveal Axel, a huge bulky guy in green with a big grin on his face.

"Oh, man! You guys totally freaked out! That was aweso-OOF!" He was interrupted mid-taunt as a hacked off Reuben head-butted his stomach. Now it was Nikki's turn to burst out laughing.



"Nice one, Reuben!" she cheered, picking him up. The pig seemed to be glowing with pride.

"Axel! What's the matter with you?!" scolded Olivia. But he didn't answer her.

"Great. Now I'm going to smell like a pig at EnderCon," complained Axel. "I thought we were buddies," he added,

glaring at Reuben, who reclined comfortably in Nikki's arms.

"You had that coming," Jesse mentioned. Nikki chuckled a bit at her brother's comment. Axel turned his glare onto the two siblings, but said nothing.

"Did you bring the fireworks?" asked Olivia, changing the subject.

"Of course I did," Axel confirmed. I even brought something for the little guy." With that, Nikki watched as he walked over to her, placed 2 black wings on Reuben's back, and a dragon mask with purple eyes on his head: an Ender Dragon costume.

"Nice," Nikki observed.

"You got Reuben a disguise?" Olivia asked with disbelief.

"Uh, we're going to a convention. SOMEbody's gotta wear a costume."

Both pleased and excited, Reuben hopped out of Nikki's arms, and ran around the treehouse, testing his new costume out. "He looks great!" Jesse said.

"Yeah. Ditto," Nikki acknowledged.

"It only took me about a million hours to build," Axel bragged. If Nikki and Jesse liked the pig as an Ender Dragon, Olivia didn't seem to think so.

"If he was REALLY your best friend, one of you wouldn't let him go outside like that." Jesse seemed to give it some thought, but Nikki said

"The only thing more dangerous than putting a costume on a pig is taking it off." Everyone gave her quizzical looks, then Olivia and Axel headed down the trapdoor.

"You guys hurry up and grab your stuff," Axel said.

"We'll meet you downstairs, okay?" added Olivia.

"Got it," replied Nikki, then watched as her friends vanished down the trapdoor.

Jesse's POV

Jesse's glance went from the trapdoor where his friends had just been to his sister, who was already looking for some gear. She opened a small chest and picked up some shears. He watched her as she put them in her pocket, mumbling something to herself, then went on to the next chest. Suddenly, a thought went through Jesse's mind. All those other guys, at the building match, they might laugh to see a little girl at a competition, laugh at her. He didn't want that. Unlike most siblings, he and Nikki were close. Ever since their parents died when a creeper horde exploded over a bridge, they had looked out for each other and watched over one another.



With this new idea in mind, Jesse walked over to his sister, unsure of what to say. He glanced at a banner of Gabriel the Warrior, one of the members of the Order of the Stone, the superheroes of the land. "So..." he said, uncomfortably, at first. "Gabriel the Warrior...you think we'll ever be that famous?" he asked her. Nikki turned her head away from the chest she had it in to look at the banner as well.

"Who knows?" was her only response. Jesse then turned towards his armor stand.

"Say, remember this armor stand you got me for Christmas? I still don't have any armor to put on it," he stated.

"Maybe someday..." Nikki called from inside the chest.

Then Jesse saw an EnderCon poster. *"Here comes the awkward part,"* he thought sadly. "One of these days, we're going to win the EnderCon building competition. Then people will say 'Hey, there goes Jesse, Olivia, Axel, and Reuben, the winners,'" Nikki's head rose from the chest, obviously noticing that he hadn't included her.

"Jesse...what are you trying to say?" she pressed, half-concerned, half-miffed.

"Well...sis...i-it's just that I'm-I'm worried about you going to the competition," Jesse admitted. "It might be best if you stay here," Nikki was both shocked and hurt.

"What?! Why? You don't think I'll drag you guys down, do you?" she cried, a stern look replacing hurt and shock.

"No, of course not!" Jesse told her. "It's just...there are a lot of jerks out there. They make us feel bad enough. I don't want them doing that to you," Nikki stared blankly at him. It was impossible to read her expression. Finally, she spoke.

"Oh, come on! Just because I'm younger doesn't mean I'm not as smart as you older guys. Heck, I might even be smarter!" Then her gaze softened. "Chill out. I'll be fine. Really, I will be." Now it was Jesse's turn to stay silent.

"You're as stubborn as Mom was," he moaned dramatically. Then, he sighed. "Alright, you're in," he said, smiling with the same softness.

"Cool! So what are we waiting for?" Nikki piped, already halfway down the ladder. "Let's go!"

Well, then! If Chapter 1 is out now, then Chapter 2 MUST be on its way too. Don't go away, folks! There's more where that came from! Ta-ta!

Chapter 2: Preparation

So, this chapter is actually filler, because I believed the story needed detail. But worry not! This will lead to better chapters farther on! Every little bit counts! Who knows, you may find something in this chapter you might like...*cough-cough ships*

Nikki's POV

Nikki could hardly believe it—her first EnderCon! There had been a close call back at the treehouse, where Jesse had shown some concerns for her, but, when they talked it all out, she and her friends were now on the way to the building competition.

“Let’s roll,” Axel said once the siblings were down.

“Yeah, dude. Roll,” Olivia replied skeptically, looking at their blocky features.

“I heard a pretty juicy rumor about the building competition, but you guys have to promise not to say anything about it,” Axel told the group. Nikki and the other two chorused “Okay.”

“Also it’s in two parts, each one more exciting than the last,” he went on.



“Spit it out, Axel,” Nikki ordered impatiently.

“Part one: the special guest at this year’s EnderCon is none other than Gabriel the Warrior him-freaking self,”

“Whoa! What’s part two?” Nikki enthusiastically asked, the suspense

already killing her.

Axel's POV

His friends looked just about prepared to hear the rest of his news. Axel was glad they had the reaction he wanted. "Part two, according to my sources, the winner of the building competition is gonna get to meet him!" At this, each of his friend's mouths dropped open.

"Catch me, sis. I'm going to faint!" Jesse whispered eagerly. He tipped backwards, only to land flat on his back. "No, you didn't catch me," he mumbled.

"Hey, how was I supposed to know you'd do a trust fall exercise all of a sudden?" Nikki retorted playfully. Everyone enjoyed a good laugh, even Jesse, and then continued on.

"It doesn't mean anything if we lose," Axel kept going. "But if we win...oh man...this would make up for all the losing."

"Meeting Gabriel would be a dream and an honor," Jesse sighed.

"Ditto to that," Nikki agreed. "This is a HUGE deal."

Olivia's POV

Olivia was glad Axel had given them that heads-up, but she still wondered: who even told him such an important thing? *"Well, he's clever,"* she guessed. *"And very sweet. It was nice of him to tell us. He's also very funny and--"*

Olivia stopped herself. What was she doing? Why was she all of a sudden thinking so deeply about Axel? He was just a good friend—right? That's when Olivia caught sight of something pinned on a tree trunk behind them, and found Axel's real "source."

"Sooooooo, does this 'source' of yours make posters for a living?" she asked her giant friend. The group then came to a stop in front of a small grove of trees that had EnderCon banners plastered all over them.

"Yeah, um...my source...doesn't exist. You guys are my only friends," Axel admitted.

"Of course we are," Nikki sighed, which earned her a deep glare from Axel.

"Guys, let's stay focused," Jesse reminded everyone. "We have a competition to win."

"But we never win," Olivia told her friend. "And this year we've got Reuben with us," she added, pointing to the dragon costume-wearing piglet walking behind them. "We basically have no chance." Offended, the pig let out an indignant oink.

"Faith, Olivia," Nikki said out loud.

Olivia turned her head to the young girl. "What?"

"A little portion, a small slice, a sliver. That's all we need to win,"

"You can't be serious, Nikki,"

"No, no," Axel jumped in. "I'm with that."

"I am too," Jesse agreed. "I should know."

Olivia looked at her three friends, who all seemed confident and bright. Maybe they DID have a chance. "All right," she said, smiling and feeling better than before.

Jesse's POV

"Wait a minute, wait a minute," Jesse realized just then.

"Waiting a minute," Nikki answered, grinning.

"Hardy-har-har. But still, we're thinking about this all wrong,"

"We are?"

"Yeah! You don't just have to build something. You have to DO something to get noticed by the judges,"

"Okay, then. So how do we do this?"

"We don't just build something functional. We build something fun. After we finish the fireworks machine like we planned, we build something cool on top of it!"

"If you want a reaction out of the judges, you build something scary," Axel was already thinking the idea over. "So I say we build a creeper."

"Wouldn't an enderman be better?" objected Olivia. "I'm more scared of enderman than creepers."

"How about a zombie?" Nikki asked. "They act like us—when working together, they can REALLY pack a punch."

"That might work, but let's go with a creeper," Jesse decided. "Axel's right—we need a big reaction."

"You're going with Axel's idea?" Olivia complained openly.

"What's wrong with my idea?" Axel growled.

"Nothing is!" Nikki quickly said, seemingly sensing trouble. "It could totally be cool."

"It IS cool,"

"Yeah," Olivia had to say. "I think this is the first time we've decided on what we're going to do before we get to the competition. Think we got everything we need?"

"It wouldn't hurt to grab a little more," Nikki figured.

"Let's get with the grabbin' then," said Axel.

Jesse was suddenly so pumped. "We are so prepared. We can't possibly lose. Cannot. Bring it in!" He stuck out his hand. Nikki laid hers on top of his, then Axel, and Olivia, and even Reuben reared up on his hind legs to join in.

"Dare to prepare, on three!" Jesse said. "Nonono, wait, preparing is daring. No, that's the same thing--"

“Forget it,” Nikki chimed. “Team. On three. One, two, three—Team!” At her word, the four friends (and Reuben!) went off in different directions to go collect the extra items.



Some of you might've already noticed it, but I'll just come right out: Olixel is the first ship seen in the story. But is it the biggest? (Hint: NOPE).

Chapter 3: Building Competition

And the title of "Best Title Namer of the Year" goes to--
 NOT jetrasher :D
 Because I am terrible at names XD

Yeah, this one is kind of long because I wanted to make some changes to original script.
 Anyways, keep your eyes open for cameos! You never know who I might be referring to!

Axel's POV

"We have what we need, we know what we're building..." Axel said proudly. "We are so ready for this."

"I'm not just ready to build—I'm ready to win," Olivia agreed. Axel was glad she did so. Olivia's confidence was one of the things he liked best about her. Although, her shyness made her look attractive too. Then again, her physical appearance was aMAZing as well.

"Oh, boy. I'm doing it again, aren't I?" Axel inwardly moaned. *"Oh, well. At least she can't hear me inside my mind."* He had done a good job of hiding it, but Axel had feelings for Olivia. One that was more than just friendship. But how could he be sure she felt the same?

Upon approaching the gate that led into the building competition, Axel saw a gang of friends wearing leather jackets with ocelot faces sewn on the back. Unfortunately, Axel knew that gang well.

"Oh, great," he moaned. "There's Lukas and the Ocelots. The rivalry continues."

"Man, they've got matching jackets and everything," Olivia saw.

"So cool..." Axel had to admit. One of the Ocelots turned around. He had narrowed, green eyes.

"Well, well, well," he huffed. "If it isn't the Order of the Losers."

"Great, the fail squad's here," said a girl from the team.

“Hey, Lukas!” a bearded teammate notified his blonde-haired friend. “Get a load of these losers!”

The boy, (Lukas), didn’t say anything insulting. He just turned and stared at the group with a blank expression. “Let’s go, guys,” he said. But the Ocelots weren’t ready to leave just yet.

“Aw, and look,” the narrow-eyed one said, pointing at Nikki. “They brought a baby with them this time.” Axel watched as Nikki shut her eyes, and let out a patient sigh, admiring her self-control. If someone said something like that to HIM, he would have been tempted to knock them out cold.



“You must be the Ocelots my brother told me about,” Nikki replied coolly. “Apparently, what he said is true. Just your average group of jerks dressed in cow hide.”

Old Narrow-Eye’s expression changed from a smirk to a snarl. “You’re gonna wish you NEVER said that, you little midget,” he hissed. “Name’s Aiden. Better learn the name well if you ever want to watch your back properly.” A barely fazed Nikki simply rolled her eyes as Aiden threateningly stalked off, leaving Axel and his buddies dumbfounded.

“What? I told you I’d be fine!” Nikki said.

“Name please?” asked the administration lady.

“Uh, Axel. And how do you do?” Axel greeted the woman back politely.

She shook her head. “No, your team name.”

“Team name?” Axel hadn’t expected that. “We are not ready for this.” He could feel the Ocelots’ gaze burn over them.

“We’re the Dead Enders!” Jesse blurted quickly.

“Sounds like a name for pirates,” Olivia commented.

“Oh, hush. A few seconds longer and we were going to be called the ‘No-Names,’” Nikki scolded.

“Okay, Dead Enders. You guys are in Booth 5,” the woman said.

Axel made his way to the stall, but got stuck in between the gates of the fence. Nikki had to push him through. The Ocelots enjoyed a good laugh, then continued on to their own booth. Axel’s cheeks heated up like a furnace. This wasn’t a good start.

Nikki’s POV

Nikki knew that the building didn’t start until everyone was at their stalls. She figured it wouldn’t hurt to look around first. She glanced over at Booth 2, where a group of three friends were looking over their materials. There was a purple-haired girl wearing headphones and had purple eyes; a blonde in a Link costume; and the last female had brown hair fashioned into two braids, a modded rifle slung over her shoulder, and a blue baseball cap.

Next to the group, in Booth 3, was a young man with a brown beard and gloves. He was working with two other girls, one who had rough black hair and wore flowing blue clothes, and the other was darker-skinned than her teammates, and had her shiny black hair pulled into a wispy ponytail.

Nikki was so focused on Booth 3, she nearly walked into a bunch of purple spikes from Booth 2. They stuck out from the ground out of nowhere, throwing Nikki onto her back. They seemed to have oak wood blocks on the tips.

“Pretty! Watch where you’re aiming those spikes! You nearly skewered that other girl!” a harsh-toned voice scolded.

“Gee, Lizzy, how else am I supposed to chop up these logs?” a teasing voice replied. “We want to make a wooden performance, don’t we?”

“...No...you didn’t...”

“Oh, yes, I did!”

The rifle girl walked over to Nikki and helped her up. “Sorry about Pretty. She can be SUPER unaware of her surroundings. Lizzy too. She’s so intent on jumping all over Pretty’s case that she forgets the victim entirely.”

“No problemo! I’m fine!” Nikki assured, trying to force her teeth to stop chattering. “My brother’s friend Axel is practically your friend’s gender bend!” Both girls cracked up at her little joke.

“Sup, kiddo?” the purple-haired girl greeted her. “Name’s Pretty the Princess.”



“My name’s I’mTooLazyToMakeAName,” Link girl said. “These two call me Lizzy.”

“And I’m Rr-the-Anonymous,” the braided one finished. “Rai-Rai for short.”

“It’s nice to meet you girls,” Nikki said with a kind smile. “I’m--”

“Nikki!” Jesse was calling her. “It’s time to start!”

“Well, see you on at EnderCon, ‘Nikki,’” Pretty said, waving as the young 14-year-old strode off to her own booth.

“New friends already,” Nikki thought triumphantly. *“Maybe this will be fun after all.”*

Olivia's POV

"Is that a freakin' beacon?" Axel peeked over that the Ocelots' booth as Nikki approached. "They have a freakin' beacon?? FREAKIN' BEACON???" Olivia saw their rivals pull glass out of their chest as well. But not just any old glass.

"That's stained glass," she notified her friends. "They're not just building a beacon. They're building a rainbow beacon!" She had a sinking feeling in her chest all of a sudden. "We're gonna lose."



"Our design is way better," Jesse protested. "A creeper that shoots fireworks is way cooler than a fancy light." Sadly, Olivia found that she couldn't agree.

"Their difficulty score is going to be higher than our total score," she pouted.

"But we got something they don't—fireworks," Nikki reminded her.

"We should probably stop staring at them, though." But it was too late for that. One of the members had already taken notice, and was ready to pounce.

"Ha-ha! Look! It's the Order of the Losers. Again," he huffed.

A female teammate chuckled at his weak joke. "Good one, Gill," she commented.

"We're just looking," Olivia told them.

"There'll be plenty of time for you all to look at it after it wins and gets shown at EnderCon," Aiden bragged.



"You're being unpleasant," Axel growled.

"Maybe not all of you," Aiden added, locking his gaze with Nikki. Olivia saw right then and there that conflict was right around the corner.

Jesse's POV

"And here's the baby again!" Aiden scoffed at Nikki, unaware that Jesse's anger was slowly rising.

"Why can't he just get off her back? She's just new!" he thought furiously.

"EnderCon doesn't admit kids younger than five," Aiden sneered. "You're gonna wish you stayed home in your crib, runt."

"You're gonna wish I stayed home too," Nikki countered. "After we kick your butt!"

Aiden was no longer smirking. A rueful look on his face, he took a step towards Nikki. But before he could touch her, Jesse stomped right in front of him.

"Don't. Even. Try," he hissed in a warning tone.

Baring his teeth in frustration, Aiden tried to move to the side to get a better angle, but Axel blocked his way.



"I don't think so, punk," he growled, cracking his knuckles. Anger must have fueled Aiden's nerve, because he seemed ready to take both Jesse and Axel. All boys readied themselves for a fight.

“Stop wasting your time, Aiden,” Lukas broke up the fight. “We’ve got work to do.” Aiden still looked ticked, but he loosened up and backed away. Jesse figured it wasn’t a fight that would lead anywhere anyway.

“You’re lucky I’m busy,” Aiden sniffed.

“Yeah, about as lucky as a star,” Nikki sarcastically shot back, but any traces of a physical fight were long gone.

“Hey, Jesse. Guys,” a new voice greeted. A red-haired girl with a black vest jacket and a blue bandanna with an iron pick over her shoulder walked in. It was Petra, Jesse’s oldest and best friend.

“Hey, Petra,” Jesse said to her, beaming. He was happy to see her. He didn’t think anyone knew, but he had a wither-sized crush on her. Jesse didn’t know it, but everyone except Petra herself saw through him.

“One of these days, Jesse, old boy...” Jesse told himself. *“You’ll get the courage to cough it up.”*

Petra’s POV

Petra glanced around at her friends. “How’s the build going?” she asked Jesse.



“Only time will tell, but we’re optimistic,” Axel informed her. Petra turned a blank look towards him, barely restraining herself from saying “That was Jesse’s question to answer.” The thing was, even though most boys who had an eye for her got a black eye in return, Jesse had captivated HER instead. It wasn’t something Petra expected to happen, but once they became best friends,

there really was no going back.

“Hey, Petra,” Lukas’s words evaporated her thoughts. “I forgot to thank you for that nether star.” Petra’s eyelids seemed to be lifting in acknowledgement, but it was really inhibition that did so.

“Hey, Lukas. Not a problem,” she replied, trying to play it cool.

“You helped these tools?” Axel asked angrily. Petra knew as well as he did that they were sworn enemies.

“For the right price, I’ll help anyone,” Petra said, fighting to ignore the disappointed look in Jesse’s emerald green eyes.

“Time to split! Before you say something else wrong!” her mind screamed. “If you need anything, you know where to find me,” Petra told her friends, trotting off.

“None of us know where to find you,” Olivia called as she walked away.

“Exactly,”

Petra walked on until she was out of earshot, then facepalmed with her free hand. “Ugh! I can’t believe I said that! ‘For the right price?’ Notch, I am NOT the girl to come to when there are neighborly troubles! And that moron, Lukas! Why would he mention the nether star trade RIGHT in front of the others?! If I had any chances, I sure don’t have them now...”

Petra supposed it didn’t matter. The life of a go-getter was a lonely one. She only wished it wasn’t that way.



Nikki's POV

Nikki watched as Petra escaped the scene. She thought she saw nervousness flash in her eyes when discussing helping everyone for the right price.

"No hard feelings, guys," Lukas said. "If you're cool with Petra, you're cool with us. So why don't we forget about all this, and, y'know, make this about how cool our builds are."

"Lukas doesn't seem too bad," Nikki thought to herself. *"I have no idea why the others think he's a jerk."*



"We're cool with Petra, but you need to teach your friends some manners," Jesse replied coolly.

"He's just trying to get into your head," assured Lukas.

"Yeah, well, have you ever heard of the expression, 'It's possible to be nice and win?'"

"Sounds like something a loser would say," Aiden huffed.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" the administration lady called out to everyone, drawing the rivals' attention to her. While the lady explained the competition and the awards, Nikki noticed the Ocelots chanting their team name and performing some sort of handshake.

"Woah. Handshake?" Olivia mused. "We don't have a handshake."

"We'll just make one up," Jesse told her, holding his hands out. At his cue, the others did as well. "We'll call it the...uhhhhhhh..." At his hesitation, Nikki started to wonder if Jesse just wanted to be as good as the other team. But that didn't mean she shouldn't leave him hanging.

"The Warrior Whip!" she blurted. The friends clashed hands, moved backwards waving their arms awkwardly, and rose them even slower.

“And, just like that, I’m nervous again,” whimpered Olivia.

“Don’t talk like that, we can do this!” Nikki comforted her. “Who needs a handshake to be a good builder? This year, the Dead Enders can’t lose!”

Her words sent fresh confidence through everyone. Nikki stuck her hand out, and, one by one, Jesse, Olivia, Axel, and Reuben laid their hands (and hooves!) on top of it.

“Let’s do it!” Axel cheered.

“Building starts—NOW!” the lady shouted. The competition was on!

Olivia’s POV

Olivia and her friends went to work on the fireworks machine. At one point, she saw Nikki wave to a group of girls who were building a statue of a stubby skeleton with a glowing blue eye and a hoodie. The girl with purple hair and headphones winked back at her and gave her a thumbs-up.

“Aw. Nikki made some friends,” Olivia cooed to herself. *“Good for her.”*

“Oh, no,” Aiden’s drawling voice busted into Olivia’s thoughts. “A fireworks dispenser? I’m so scared!” he snorted mockingly.

“You worry about your build, and we’ll worry about ours,” Jesse snapped back as Olivia flared with indignation.

The four friends hopped in front of the machine and built the creeper in front of it. Once that was done, the gang stood at the top of the statue. Olivia took a peek at the other builds. One was just a scramble of wood components. Another was a statue of the skeleton, and one group had built a scale model of a mansion with a decorative garden. Olivia saw a bearded man with brown gloves high-five a dark-skinned girl and a black-haired Oriental female.



"That must be theirs," she thought. Turning her attention to the rainbow beacon, Olivia saw that she and her friends would have to be very lucky to outpace these other guys.

"And now, the moment of truth," Jesse sighed deeply.

Axel nodded in Olivia's direction, giving her the signal.

"Here goes nothing..." she took a deep breath, and pulled the lever. Instantly, fireworks of an array of different colors shot out from behind the creeper, making it look like it was exploding.

Olivia found herself grinning from ear to ear. They actually might win this thing!

Axel's POV

"Oh, man, that looks so cool. We'll win this for sure," Axel was breathless at his own build. Some people saw the creeper and stalked forward. They looked up at the people who made it and smiled.

"Guys, people are looking at us," Jesse whispered.

"So roll with it," Nikki answered. "It means they like it."

"Good build, man!" a guy from the crowd called.

Axel felt high to heaven. His friends seemed to have felt the same way. Olivia was right: this year had been different. Even their opponents were waving back up at them.

"Could things get any better?" he thought.

Nikki's POV

Nikki was so astonishingly happy at the outcome of this day. She got to go to her first building competition, she made new friends, people liked her build, and now it might get sent to EnderCon! Pretty good for her first time. Even their opponents were cheering. The three girls she met earlier beamed up at her from atop a...dragon head blaster? She sure had a lot to learn about those three.



The only team that wasn't cheering was the Ocelots. Aiden was especially angered.

"What? No way! It's just a bunch of dyed wool!" he protested. Nikki felt kind of sorry for him. But the feeling wasn't going to last long.

His eye caught a pool of lava. When he thought no one was looking, he broke the stone block keeping it concealed! "Whoops..." he muttered innocently. The lava reached Reuben, setting his costume on fire! The poor pig squealed fearfully, and took off into the woods.

"Oh, no! Reuben's on fire!" Jesse cried. "Reuben, no! Come back!" But the piglet was far too frightened to listen.

"It was Aiden!" Nikki seethed. "That punk!"

"The lava's getting closer!" Olivia warned, and indeed it was.

"It's gonna ruin the build!" Axel realized, which was true. The entire thing was wool and wood. There wouldn't even be time to find water.

“But Reuben’s going to get lost!” Nikki protested. “I’m going after him!” With that, she leapt down from the statue, careful to avoid the lava, and raced after him.

“Oh, no you don’t! It’s payback time!” Aiden shouted, lunging for Nikki, meaning to knock her into the lava. But before he could reach her, he was surrounded by a purple energy. He floated into the air, lingered for a few seconds, then was thrown down harshly. Nikki whipped her head around only to find the source of power. It was Pretty! Her eye and hand was glowing with the same purple energy that shrouded Aiden.

“Go, go!” the princess urged. “I’ll hold him for as long as I can!”

“Maya! Gill! Don’t let her get to the woods!” Aiden managed to yell, not yet ready to let Nikki slip from his vengeance. Maya and Gill surged forward, but they didn’t catch Nikki either. Rai-Rai caught Maya around the waist with a whip made out of a lead, and Lizzy froze Gill in place with a strange metal stick with two loops on the end.

“You guys stay and save the build!” Jesse ordered his friends, leaping down after Nikki. “Sis, I’m coming with you!”

“We’ve got it covered, you guys! Be careful!” Olivia told the siblings as they took off. Axel jumped from the statue, and was flattened by Olivia as she came down after him. “We’ll meet up with you guys at EnderCon!” she promised, right before Axel got to his feet, bucking her off.

“You think they’ll be okay?” Nikki asked concernedly as Olivia and Axel built a cobblestone defense in front of their build. “Aiden might try something.”

Jesse gave her a comforting look. “Hey, your new friends are still there, aren’t they? Axel and Olivia will be fine. Now, let’s go find Reuben!”

So Aiden's been unmasked as a jerk. BIG surprise. (And by that I mean, not at all) I'm glad I was able to get this out before my two-week departure. Did you spot all the cameos? Let me know in the comments below! Peace!

Chapter 4: So, We Meet Again

Fun fact: Do you guys know how long it took me to type the title correctly?

Answer: 15 times.

NOT KIDDING

Jesse's POV

That night, Jesse and Nikki ran deeper into the woods. Still no sign of Reuben. Jesse was starting to get worried. Nighttime plus no allies meant huge trouble. They had to find Reuben fast. So far, he and his sister had found pig tracks, a carrot, and saw smoke in the distance, but that was all. A little farther up, there was a herd of pigs, but none of them were Reuben. He tried calling out, but only the older pigs responded.

"Reuben? Reu—no not you gu—pigs! All pigs but Reuben shut up!" he snapped. None of them listened, but kept on oinking. To make things worse, the herd had scattered the ash-burnt pig tracks from earlier. So now they'd have to rely on luck to find their pet. Jesse searched a nearby shrub, but a chicken popped out, slightly jumpscaring him.

"Is it weird that I'm suddenly craving bacon now?" Nikki hissed in a grave tone, eyeing the herd of pigs pushing against the siblings, trying to find food. Jesse suggested they follow the smoke before things got violent, and the pair pressed on.

"Reuben, it's getting scary out here!" Jesse called out, nervously glancing at the rising moon. He and Nikki didn't have much time left before the monsters started spawning. When they saw that the smoke was coming from Reuben's dragon costume, the siblings started to panic.

"Oh, geez! I was just kidding about the bacon! Pleased don't be toasted, Reuben!" Nikki begged. Jesse lifted the costume wing, but to his relief, it was empty. Reuben was no longer inside. Breathing sighs of relief, Jesse and Nikki stomped out the smoke and kept moving.

"Hi!" said a sudden cheery voice. Whirling around, Jesse saw a young man with gloves and a beard waving at him. He was standing with an Oriental female with blue clothes and a girl with caramel skin and a ponytail. It was the team from Booth 3.

Nikki's POV

Nikki recognized the other team from the building competition. What were they doing here at night?

"We saw a flaming pig go running past our house," the bearded man explained. "It was wearing a dragon costume like yours."

"You saw Reuben?! Where?!" Nikki asked excitedly.

"He seemed really scared," the blue-clothed girl said. "We helped get that outfit off, then took him to our house. He's waiting there now."

"Oh, thank Notch!" Jesse breathed. "Thank you all so much."

"Happy to do it," said the ponytailed girl. "Now, let's bring you to him."

After a few short minutes of walking to a birch wood cottage, Jesse and Nikki saw Reuben reclining on the porch. When he saw his owners, he wagged his chubby haunches and sprang off the steps, racing for them.

"Reuben! There you are," Jesse sighed. He fed him the carrot, which Reuben hungrily munched up, and pat his head.



“Oh, we’re so happy to see you,” Nikki gushed, scratching the piglet under his chin. Reuben gave a contented squeal, then allowed Nikki to pick him up “Thanks again for finding him,” she told the trio gratefully.

“No sweat,” the man said modestly. “Oh yeah, I’m fighter33000, but you can call me William.”

“Micherio123,” said Ponytail. “But Kristine’s an alternative.”

“And my name’s Random-Rengeki,” said the last person. “But call me Van.”

“Nice to meet you guys,” Nikki said politely. “Thanks again!” Relieved and happy, Jesse, Nikki, and Reuben made their way to EnderCon. A little while later, in front of a cave, Nikki heard something echo inside of it. Was it the three friends again? No, they were back at their house. What was in there?

Curiously, Nikki snuck a peek in the cave. A zombie popped out, startling her! There was a whole horde of them in there, and they were coming straight for them!

“Run, guys!” Jesse cried. In no hurry to object, Nikki took off after her brother and her pet pig. A little way off, Jesse stopped, breathing hard.

“*Whew!* I think—we’re good--” he gasped, right before a creeper appeared right next to them. Heart thudding with alarm, Nikki sprang away, on the run again. Once more, the trio stopped to catch their breath once they were sure the creeper was out of eyeshot.

“I think we made it--” Jesse gasped again, right before an arrow landed right next to his head! There were skeletons above them, shooting at the three with their bows!

“Your judgement skills are life-threateningly horrible!” Nikki barked as they dodged the arrows and kept going.

“It’s nighttime! These damn things spawn everywhere!” Jesse retorted. “And besides, I’m leading us to safety, aren’t I?” Just as he finished saying those words, he steered the group right into a wall, impossible to climb, trapping them.

“You were saying?” Nikki hissed, glancing nervously at the approaching mobs behind them. Knowing there was no other way out, she drew the only weapon she had: a wooden sword. Likewise, Jesse drew his own as well. He swung hard, knocking the first zombie back forcefully.



"Back! Get back!" he screamed.
 "Stay behind me, Reuben," he warned his pig. "Nikki, cover me!"

"Can't talk right now! Too busy covering you!" Nikki shouted back, deflecting a skeleton's arrow. Together, the two siblings hacked and swung until the closest zombies were reduced to rotten flesh. Then,

Nikki took another swing, and her sword snapped in half.

"Stupid wooden swords!" Jesse cursed as his own poofed into white mist as well. Now they really WERE in trouble. To make things worse, a couple of spiders had joined the scene as well.

"I know it's bad, I'll think of something," Jesse assured Nikki.

"There's too many of them! Do it fast!" she urged.

"Don't leave that spot no matter what, you hear me?" Jesse ordered. "Both of you stay behind me. I've got you."

Reuben cowered underneath Jesse's legs without a moment's hesitation, but Nikki stayed in her spot for a moment. She then heard the groan of a zombie, and whirled around too late. The zombie slapped her, and she felt a sharp impact on the left side of her face, up near her forehead. The zombie had hit her eye!

Jesse's POV

Jesse whipped around and stared in horror when he saw Nikki on the ground, trying to scoot away from the zombie behind him. "Get away from her!" he shouted, punching it with all his might. By power, or maybe by sheer luck, the zombie disintegrated. Jesse turned to his sister to examine her. Her left eye was swollen shut and purple. "Oh no! He got you!" he gasped.

"Forget it. It's just a black eye. I'll live," she tried to assure him.

With his attention on Nikki, Jesse hardly noticed the spider preparing to pounce. He only saw it when it was on top of him. "Get off me!" he growled, trying to knock the spider off. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw another spider trap Nikki and Reuben in a web and move in on them. Frightened, Reuben crouched in Nikki's arms as she hopelessly tried to punch the hostile mobs away. This was a disaster! Could no one help them?

Petra's POV

Petra strode along cheerfully, her iron pick slung over her shoulder, feeling better than she had been at the building competition. After her embarrassing moment, she met a shady dealer named Ivor who said he would trade a diamond for a wither skull. Though he wouldn't tell her why, it was a good deal. So Petra had just returned from the Nether, her fresh victory over that wither skeleton in her mind. She personally felt lucky that it dropped one; mob heads were really rare to get. As she neared the cliff, she heard a shout of panic.

"*That's Jesse's voice,*" she realized. What was going on? Running now, she approached the cliff, and saw that Jesse was trapped underneath a spider, and his younger sister Nikki was trapped in a spider web! Petra didn't need someone to place a sign to tell her they needed help. She leapt down and killed the spider attacking Nikki and Reuben, and whipped out a pair of shears to cut them loose.

"Thanks--" Nikki started to say, but Petra cut her off.

"Save it. We need to leave. Now," Petra answered, then ran off to go help Jesse. She shoved off the spider and hacked at it with her pick until it died. "Come on, let's get out of the open," she advised her friend, who didn't waste a second. He tore after her the first chance he got.

Nikki's POV

Barely catching her breath, Nikki slowly crept down the ladder that led into the cave Petra was taking her and her brother inside of.

"I wanna show you guys something," Petra told the pair as they went further inside. Jesse glanced about nervously, obviously sharing Nikki's own concern for any remaining monsters nearby.

"Not that this isn't a really cool dimly-lit tunnel, but how far away is this thing you wanna show us?" Jesse asked. Nikki could tell he was fighting to keep his voice steady.

"Careful, Jesse," Petra teased. "You don't want to get a reputation as a wimp."



"This isn't my first time in a cave, Petra," he retorted.

"Yeah, but have you ever seen--" a dramatic pause. Then, Petra took something out of her pocket. "—a wither skull?" The siblings gaped in perfect unison. "Fresh from the Nether."

"That's insane, Petra," Jesse scolded. "You could've gotten yourself killed."

"Don't worry so much," Petra comforted him, putting the skull away. "I can handle myself."

"And besides, why are YOU so worried?" Nikki suddenly questioned.

"I...uh...well..." Jesse was beginning to blush.

"*Busted*," Nikki thought with a grin. She knew everything: Jesse had a crush on Petra. Like, gigantic. The only person too blind to see it was Petra herself, which Nikki found rather odd. But what did it matter?

"There's this guy I'm meeting up with at EnderCon," Petra went on, not seeing Jesse's mistake. "He's gonna trade me a diamond for it."

“The guy you got the skull for—what’s his deal?” Jesse’s concern for Petra was showing once again.

“He’s kinda strange, but hey. Everyone’s got their thing,”

“And you never thought to ask him— ‘hey, what’s with your whole...totally normal...not weird...skull thing?’”

“As long as he’s willing to pay, I earned that diamond,”

“Wow,”

“Wow, what?”

“In a single day, you went to the Nether, you killed a wither skeleton—I mean we DID build a super-cool statue, but still—it’s pretty sweet being you, huh?” Jesse said, smiling.

Petra’s POV

Petra felt odd inside when Jesse complimented her, like a swarm of bats were flapping about, trying to flee the pit of her stomach. Maybe she was nervous about the deal? That’s when she got the most perfect idea.

“You know...you could come with me,” she told Jesse, unable to hide the shyness in her tone and the blush in her cheeks.

“I’d be honored to be your backup,” Jesse said almost at once.

“You don’t have to get all excited,” Petra said, realizing she was blushing even more now. “I just said--”

“That he could come with you. I know! I was right here! It was amazing!” Nikki squealed. “This qualifies as a date, right?”

Petra was sure she stopped breathing for a second.

“A what?! No!” Jesse protested, going red, which Petra was half-relieved to see, upon heating up herself. “Nikki, we’re just friends!”

“Super-close friends, if you ask me,” Nikki stated. “Maybe something more...?” she added with mischief in her eyes.

“No, no, no, you’re dead wrong,” Petra growled, turning away and continuing to walk. She should’ve known that just made things worse.

“Ah-ha! Denial is the clincher! You’re in love, you two!”

Fighting to be calm, and to push back the fact that what Nikki said was true, Petra reached her crafting table checkpoint. She gave permission for Jesse and Nikki to make new swords for themselves, which she hoped would take their minds off Nikki’s confronting statement.

When Jesse had a stone sword, and Nikki an iron one, the group pressed on until they reached the end of the cave, which jutted out to the bridge.



“Check it out—EnderCon’s all lit up,” Petra informed her friends.

“I can’t believe it, we won!” cheered Jesse.

“Axel was right—everyone loves a creeper,” Nikki said.

“Good for you guys,” Petra congratulated the pair.

“It’s about time we beat Lukas and his gang of jerks!” Jesse smirked in satisfaction. “What kind of stupid name is the Ocelots anyway?”

Petra’s face fell a bit, and she saw that Nikki’s did too when he said that. “You know, Lukas may be kind of arrogant, but he HAS come through for me in some tricky situations,” she told her friend. “You might want to get to know him—just in case.”

“Yeah, you might be right,” Jesse reluctantly sighed.

"I'm just saying—if you run into him at EnderCon, try talking to him,"

"I don't need a lecture on the power of collaboration, Petra,"

Petra stifled a giggle as Nikki socked her brother's arm. "How about a lecture on the power of sisterly rage? It's short—but deadly."

"Scary, isn't she?" Jesse eyed Petra humorously.

"Worse than that wither skeleton I fought," Petra played along.

"C'mon, let's hurry," Nikki urged the two, dashing ahead. With Reuben following her, Jesse and Petra were left alone on the bridge.

Jesse's POV

Jesse could hardly believe it—he was alone. At night. With the girl of his dreams. This was the perfect opportunity.

"Remember what EnderCon was like before it was cool?" Petra asked, trying to strike up some friendly conversation.

"Remember what WE were like before WE were cool?"

"Some of us will never be cool,"

"Ha-ha,"

"So...where do you think Nikki got the idea?"

"...What idea?"

"Of us? Being a couple?"

Jesse nearly stumbled in surprise. "What?"

"I mean; I'm not saying she's right—that's crazy! But still, as crazy as it is, how could she think up of something like that?"

The evening air suddenly no longer felt cool to Jesse. "Um...well...I, uh..." He swallowed nervously, careful to avoid looking directly into Petra's midnight black eyes. "*Great,*" he moaned inwardly. "*Now I'm a bumbling mess.*"

Then, as luck would have it, Reuben let out a frightened squeal, galloping as fast as his little legs would carry him back towards his owner, Nikki padding after him, her iron sword drawn.

"Hey, what's the matter?" he asked her. She turned to Jesse, eyes wild with fright.

"Creepers!" she cried, pointing to the green creatures, who stepped onto the bridge. Behind them, Jesse heard the groans of some zombies.

"Crap..." he cursed, glancing around. This didn't look good.

"Well, there's only one way off this bridge," Petra decided. "Whatever we do, we do it together."

Jesse privately felt a warmth wriggle around inside him at those words, but now was not the time to enjoy it. Then, he stared down at the water. Could it be possible to jump to safety?

No...Jesse had made himself look stupid enough in front of Petra. He didn't want to become cowardly too.

"The only way off this bridge is through them," he said, drawing his stone sword. Petra drew her own and faced the zombies behind them. Back to back, they fought the mobs the best they could. But more and more came!

"There's too many of them!" Nikki yelled.

"I DON'T WANNA DIE!" Jesse wailed. Just when it seemed like it was all over, Petra grabbed his hand, and yanked him off the bridge right before a creeper exploded, triggering many more to do the same thing.

Jesse found himself free-falling through the air, aimlessly waving his arms while Petra just seemed to naturally glide down. About somewhere in the middle of the free fall, he and Petra locked eyes. She smiled at him warmly, and suddenly, the terror of falling was replaced with an

odd-yet-happy feeling of joy. The wind whistling in his ears transformed into the beating of his own heart. Jesse couldn't understand. Why was he feeling this way? He'd been told that this was how his father felt when he fell...in love?!

Jesse was completely astonished. He always knew that he had a crush on Petra, but love?! Nikki had been right all along. Just then, in the split-second where Jesse had processed this, he realized that he'd been smiling back at Petra the entire time. And now, their faces were mere inches apart. What if they...y'know!

"Huh. When Dad talked about falling in love, I never thought it would happen literally," Jesse thought with mild amusement. Should he go for it?



Suddenly, Petra's warm smile changed dramatically to a look of horror. Turning himself in midair, he saw a creeper, ready to explode! Reflex taking over will, Jesse punched it away. It exploded against a flock of chickens instead. As the fall continued, Jesse wondered if he hadn't punched the creeper away in time, if it would have made the choice he had considered making for him.

Before he could think about his current moment any longer, it abruptly ended when he belly-flopped into the water.

"Burns; it burns!" he howled in pain.

“Don’t you know?” Petra called back to him. “You dive INTO the water. You don’t land on top of it.” Still, Jesse could see that his ungraceful move had amused her. “Pull yourselves together, and follow me.”

Jesse turned to see Nikki paddling after Petra, Reuben riding her back like she was a floating log. Lost in the feeling of his own love, Jesse had nearly forgotten that his sister had fallen too. Sighing, he stroked to shore. They had a deal to make.

So, that was MY personal take on the bridge fall. Seriously, I could've SWORN that the creeper would explode Jesse into Petra if he hadn't punched it away! Am I the only one thinking this?!

Aside from that, there were more dA cameos!

He's the only Wattpadder who I know of here, so I could only mention here ^^; Sorry, Kristine and Van.

Chapter 5: EnderCon

Welp, I wrote right into Chapter 6 before realizing I needed to post Chapter 5. *facepalm* No wonder it took so long! XD

Nikki's POV

"EnderCon is so big!" Nikki thought in amazement. It was to be remembered that this was her first time in the convention. Jesse, Olivia, and Axel had always told her stories of this place, but she'd never seen it with her own eyes. After a short swim to shore, she, Jesse, Petra, and Reuben had taken a shortcut through the woods under the bridge, or what was left of it, straight to EnderCon.

"Hey! Watch it!" Jesse pulled Nikki sharply towards him, out of the path of a pet booth. But not fast enough, because her hand nicked a wooden cage, knocking it over. "Ugh! Great! I know this is your first time and all, but you need to use that remaining eye properly!" he scolded. Reuben gave an oink of agreement, rubbing his head against Nikki's leg worriedly.

"I can't help it if I want to look around," Nikki protested, bending down to pet Reuben. "In case you've forgotten, I haven't been here ever, and I want to get a good view of the place."

"You DO realize we have to help Petra first, right?"

"Exactly. So I want to look around before we're stuck with nothing but a dark creepy alley to look at,"

"How do you even know that's where we're hosting the deal?"

"Would YOU perform some shady dealing out in the open?"

"Speaking of the deal--" Petra interrupted their argument. "When I'm making the trade, I need you two to let me do the talking, okay?"



“Sure, I’ll let you handle it,” Jesse simply agreed.

“And if you want to be really helpful, try to look intimidating,”

“Like this?” Jesse asked, pulling on the toughest face Nikki had ever seen him attempt.

“I’m...less scared of you, than I am scared for you,” she giggled, which got Jesse to turn on her, glaring.

Axel’s POV

Axel paced back and forth nervously. It was dark already, and Jesse and Nikki still hadn’t returned from their Reuben retrieval. Had something bad happened?

“Maybe we should go look for them,” he said to Olivia.

“Just relax. I’m sure they just got held up somewhere,” Olivia assured him. “EnderCon is pretty popular, so I wouldn’t be surprised if they had to jostle through a few people to get here.” Axel guessed that was true, but nothing stopped him from being concerned. Although...he DID really like hanging out with Olivia alone. After all, who doesn’t like being alone with your crush/best friend?

“It’s sweet of you to worry about them, though,” Olivia added shyly.



"Oh! Uh...yeah, sure," Axel replied awkwardly. Silence.

"Well...Olivia?" Axel asked.

"Hmmm?"

"Since they're not here, maybe we could--"

"Oh look! They made it! They're here!" Olivia interrupted happily, rushing towards their friends as they appeared with Reuben and...Petra?

"Now?" he said, partly disappointed. *"Oh well,"* he sighed. *"You WERE worried about them before. May as well go say hi."*

Olivia's POV

"Jesse! Nikki!" Olivia heard Axel's booming voice greet their friends.

"And...Petra?" she asked, puzzled. What was the redheaded trader doing with Jesse and his sister?

"Hey, you all know Petra, my new super-close friend? We're super-close now," Jesse said, trying to be cool. But Olivia and Axel gave him skeptical looks, and Petra facepalmed as Jesse admitted they ran into each other while he and Nikki were looking for Reuben.

"They nearly kissed when we fell from a bridge," Nikki said aside from the other two. "Neither of them will admit it, but it was pretty sweet." Axel grinned as if he agreed with her. But Olivia, although also pleased to hear the progress of Jesse and Petra's relationship, was more concerned about Nikki's eye, which looked as if it was replaced with a prune.

"Hey, what happened to your eye, Nikki?" she asked.

"Oh, this? Nearly forgot about it," the young girl admitted.

"We had a little run-in with some zombies," Jesse informed them. "They wacked her good, but she held her own." He ruffled her head teasingly, and she pushed it away, though she couldn't stop herself from smiling.

"What were you doing in the middle of the woods, Petra?" Axel wanted to know.

"Nothing. Just...drawn by the sound of Jesse's high-pitched screams..." Petra answered, but she seemed hesitant.

"Seems to me you were looking for him to begin with," Olivia thought, but she kept this to herself. She didn't want to embarrass the trader. "Sorry we didn't come with you guys," she apologized.

"But hey, we won!" Axel added, showing them the large wool creeper behind them. Personally, if Olivia didn't know any better, she'd think it would actually explode. It looked so lifelike.

"I'm proud of you guys," Jesse congratulated his friends.

"Aw, shucks," Axel said bashfully.

"Don't make me blush," Olivia pleaded. Then, her eyes narrowed dangerously, and she got serious. "Seriously. DON'T."



"Hey, Jesse, Nikki," Petra interrupted their celebration. "It's time to go see about that 'thing.'"

"Oh, right, the 'thing,'" Jesse agreed.

"Subtle," Olivia commented.

"Yeah?"

“As a punch to the face. Axel and I were heading into EnderCon anyway, and NO, Nikki, it’s not a date,” she said warningly, one step ahead of Jesse’s romantically mischievous sister. She looked a bit deflated, but she recovered quickly. Though she didn’t know why, Olivia had the feeling she was disappointing herself as well.

Petra’s POV

“See you guys there?” Olivia said her farewells to the trio.

“I heard there’s free cake by the map booth...” Axel said, but Petra didn’t hear anymore before she turned to the siblings.

“Hurry—we’re supposed to meet in that dark, creepy ally over there,” she told them, pointing to the meet-up spot.

“Called it!” Nikki couldn’t resist adding, clearly satisfied. Rolling his eyes, Jesse followed Petra into the alley.

“Dark...dark...VERY dark in here,” Petra heard in murmur behind her. They were here...but something was wrong.



“That’s weird...he said the dark, creepy alley behind the gates, but...he’s not here. Maybe he’s late?”

“Are you sure THIS is the dark, creepy alley he meant?” Jesse asked.

“Hmmm...I was,” she replied. “Okay, new plan. You two stay here in case this IS the spot he meant, and I’ll look

around.”

“Now that I’m actually in the scene, something about this feels off to me,” Nikki confessed.

“All my secret deals feel off,” Petra assured her. “That’s why I usually keep them a secret. I’ll be back before you know it.” Petra turned and left, hoping nothing would go wrong.

Jesse's POV

Jesse rocked awkwardly back and forth on his feet as Petra exited the alley. He hadn't been that chatty ever since the bridge scene. His mind was still on that slow-mo fall they made together. Left alone, he finally had a chance to think about it clearly. What had happened back there? He had discovered that he had fallen in love with a girl he knew would never say she loved any boy, much less him, and that was pretty much it. But was there more to it? Did she like him back, despite her personality? Had his father ever explained in detail what love was? Why did he find this out now?

"Ugh...so much for thinking over this clearly," Jesse thought aloud.

"So...what was that little scene about back there?" Nikki purred mischievously. Jesse stood erect, inwardly cringing over the fact that his sister had heard.

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Jesse insisted, fighting his blood cells not to rush to his face.

"Yeah, yeah, I get it. You think I was sleeping during that free-fall? I saw the entire thing! Come ON, bro! Just tell her!"

"You're always crazier than I gave you credit for. What if she doesn't like me back?! I'll ruin our friendship!"

"Fine. But keep this in mind: friendship never parts, but motives seep in,"

Before Jesse could make sense out of Nikki's words, he heard someone clear their throat behind them. He whirled around, startled, as a man in beige stepped out of the shadows. He had a long black beard and a long, flat nose, almost like a villager's, except it wasn't big.

"And just who are you two?" he growled.

"No, who are YOU?" Nikki shot back, causing Jesse to wince. Hostility wasn't going to help Petra with her deal at all.

"If either of you belonged here, you would know!"

“Unless...that’s all part of the plan?” Jesse added hopefully, trying to cool down the heated mood.

“I’m supposed to meet with Petra, not whatever you’re supposed to be!” the man barked. “Give me one good reason why I shouldn’t walk out of here right now!”

Nikki’s POV

“Geez, this guy’s loud,” Nikki thought, but didn’t dare put words to her thought to avoid making the man angrier.

“I’m with Petra,” Jesse told the man. “We’re her partners.”

“My deal is with her—not her boyfriend,” the man sniffed. Nikki barely suppressed laughing aloud, but a snicker escaped her. Quickly, Jesse yanked her aside.

“You are NOT allowed to turn that into anything,” he whispered warningly. Standing up straight, he said to the dealer, “She’ll be here, but we can get started without her.”



“Smooth move, Jesse. That’ll buy us some time,” Nikki silently praised her brother.

“Do you have the skull?” the man pressed impatiently. Both siblings stared at each other uncomfortably.

"Jinxed it," Nikki gulped inwardly. "Petra has it, and she'll be back any minute now," she promised the guy.

"Well...as long as she's bringing it...I suppose it wouldn't kill me to wait a bit longer."

"Handled like a pro,"

The three waited in an uncomfortable silence. At last, Petra rounded the corner and greeted them.

"Ivor! Sorry I'm late, but good things are worth waiting for," she said. "I've got what you asked for."

"If you have what you promised us," Jesse cut in.

"You didn't say anything about your soulmate here," the man, supposedly called Ivor, huffed. "And I don't like surprises."

"He's just a friend. Not a soulmate," Petra corrected through gritted teeth. It was plain to see she was fighting to stay calm.

"And if you're willing to share serious business with CHILDREN..." Ivor continued, glowering at Nikki. "Perhaps we should call the whole thing off."

"My friends are fine, right you guys?" Petra told the pair, giving them a "don't-screw-this-up-or-I'll-screw-YOU-up" look. "There's no problem here."

"I'm telling you, something's out of place here!" Nikki whispered fiercely, but neither Petra or Jesse seemed to have heard.

"Let's just do this thing," Jesse sighed.

"That's what I thought," Petra replied, satisfied.

"Proceed, then," Ivor said.

Petra took out the skull and held it out to Ivor. He took it from her and examined it closely. He seemed pleased, which relaxed Nikki a bit. She still couldn't shake off the feeling that something was botched, though.

"I'll take that diamond now," Petra said. Ivor looked up from the skull and gestured to the chest behind them.

"Take it. You've earned it," he nodded, then resumed studying the skull. All three turned and opened the chest, but when Nikki saw what was inside, her suspicious feelings were confirmed.

"Uh, this isn't a diamond--" Jesse said as Petra yanked out the contents.

"I TOLD you something was up," Nikki mumbled.

"No, it's lapis!" she growled, whipping her head back towards Ivor. Nikki looked up too, and saw that Ivor had made a run for it. They had been conned!

"Ooh! Plot twist! You know what that means!" Nikki grinned broadly.

"What?" Jesse queried.

"Hot pursuit time! YEE-HAW!" Nikki shot out of the alley like an arrow. Reuben oinked gleefully, and galloped after her, Jesse and Petra close behind.



"I'm either getting that diamond, or I'm getting my skull back," Nikki heard Petra say behind her.

"Or you'll make him pay, right? Right?" Jesse asked excitedly.

"Come on," was the only reply.

The trio rounded a corner and exited the alley, which jutted out into the middle of EnderCon. They didn't see Ivor anywhere.

"We lost him," Jesse groaned. But Nikki wasn't stopping here.

“Then we’ll just have to find him again. Petra, go right while Jesse and I go left. If he’s in this vicinity, we should be able to trap him,” Nikki was surprised how easily she laid her plan out.

Nodding once, Petra went off in the other direction while Nikki and her older brother went straight ahead. As Nikki scoured the area for Ivor, she saw a flash of blonde hair. Taking a closer look, she identified a black leather jacket, a purple-and-white striped shirt, and faded jeans. It was Lukas; the Ocelot team leader was here at EnderCon and leaning against a stall pole, lost in thought. Nikki remembered what Petra had told them back on the bridge: *“You might want to get to know him—just in case.”*

Plastering a friendly smile on her face, she walked over to him, a puzzled Jesse padding after her.

Lukas’ POV

Lukas stood alone, feeling blank. His friends had lost the building competition for the first time in a long time. Aiden looked furious when Jesse and his friends were dubbed the winners. Though his friends were angry, he was disappointed, but not because they lost, but because his attempt to make nice with Jesse’s gang didn’t work out well. Though...Jesse’s younger sister didn’t seem to have a hostile glare in her eyes. Was it possible he could make a connection through her?

No...Jesse would have warned her to stay away from him. He wished they didn’t misunderstand him so. Sighing, Lukas flicked his head up unconsciously. And who would be there walking towards him with a friendly grin other than Nikki?



“Sup?” Lukas greeted her as she approached.

“Nothing, sup with you?” she replied.

“Nothing, sup with YOU?”

“She just said, nothing,” Jesse interrupted, looking hostile. His defensive faced vanished

when Nikki kicked his leg.

“Hey...congrats on the win,” Lukas said hesitantly. “You guys really deserved it.”

"Your beacon wasn't too shabby," Nikki said politely.

"You don't have to do that; you know?"

"I don't have to...I want to. Listen--" Nikki said. "I know Peachy McBlockhead over here gave me the wrong idea at first, but I figured I'd give you a shot before judging you."

Lukas was sure he was dreaming. Had Nikki just...accepted him? *"Wow...she's really nice...I think I'll like being her friend! Even if she IS younger."*

"Well...thanks. You're alright, Nikki," Lukas said, ruffling Nikki's hair, half-worried that Jesse would react. But Jesse didn't move, or even look threatening. If anything, he looked confused now.

"Hey, Lukas, have you seen a guy with a long beard anywhere?" he asked him.

"No. Why?" Lukas wanted to know.

"He scammed Petra out of a diamond earlier,"

"Whoa...everyone knows you don't mess with Petra—not if you know what's good for you. I'll keep an eye out, okay?"

"Thanks,"

Lukas looked off to the right uncomfortably, then scratched his head. "So, uh...we cool?"

"Yeah, we're cool,"

"Cool-cool,"

"Cool beans,"

"Cool-a-rama,"

"We get it! You're both cool!" Nikki said good-naturedly. "Now, we should get a move on, bro." Jesse noogied her playfully in return.

“Ha! See you later, Lukas,”

“Yeah, see ya,” Lukas said his goodbyes, smiling as the siblings headed off. He was glad he had finally got what he wanted for a long time: their friendship. What could possibly go wrong now?

Axel's POV

“Ha-ha-ha!” Axel taunted a falling chicken as it fluttered clumsily into the fence of the chicken machine. “Thought you could just wiggle right out of that trap, didn’t you? Well, wiggle as much as you want! You’re still not going anywhere!” He absolutely LOVED this chicken machine. Unnecessarily complicated, mean to birds for no reason...it was his type of build.

Axel felt a tap on his shoulder. He turned around and saw Jesse and Nikki standing there. “Axel, listen up, have you seen a creepy-looking guy anywhere?”

“No, but Petra told me what happened,” Axel said, remembering how steamed the redhead was for being so easily outsmarted. “I’m keeping a lookout.” It wasn’t so convincing, for they were eyeing both him and the chicken machine suspiciously.

“Alright, alright! I’ll look!” he snapped, getting tired of their stares. “After I watch one more chicken get owned.” He heard them sigh, then walk off in another direction. “*Or maybe two, or three, or six...*”

Jesse's POV

Jesse was annoyed by Axel’s reluctance to help. He always had to be so lazy sometimes. As he was walking away, he noticed a beige-robed person walking into the crowd. “Ah-ha! I see you now, weirdo,” he said to himself, speed-walking after him. But as he got closer, Aiden appeared out of nowhere and in front of him and Nikki.

“Well, if it isn’t Team Trashbag!” he snickered. “How’s your stupid pig?” Jesse tried to look past him, but Aiden kept on leaning in his way.

“Aiden, you idiot!” Nikki hissed; Jesse suspected she was at the end of her rope now.



“Hey, who are you calling an idiot?” Aiden snarled down at her.

“Perhaps you didn’t hear me when I said, ‘Aiden,’ you idiot,”

“What makes you think you’re smarter than me?! You’re the one who thinks this loser and that go-getter have a shot!”

That stuck Nikki’s nerve. “Big. Mistake,” she hissed in a barely audible voice. “Hope you don’t have a crush on anyone, because you’re not going to be having kids anytime soon.” Before either Jesse or Aiden could make sense out of her words, Nikki drew her right leg up sharply, and nailed Aiden right in his most sensitive spot.

“AAAAAAAIIIIIIIEEEE!” Aiden howled like a dying wolf. He dropped to his knees, whimpering, then finally got enough voice to whine, “Right in the blocks...” before collapsing. Jesse could only stare, open-mouthed, as Nikki calmly stepped over Aiden as if he was a bothersome paving stone. Sometimes, his little sister could be scary!

Jesse crept up behind Ivor quietly. He was talking with a group of people. Part of him wondered why a secretive person like him would be so social at a time of escape. But he didn’t look too deeply into it, as he was mostly thinking about finally catching the thief, and how impressed Petra would be when she discovered he caught him so fast.

“Hey, where do you think you’re--” he began as he forced him around, only to discover that it WASN’T Ivor—it wasn’t even a “him” at all.

“What do you think you’re doing?!” she snapped.

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Jesse quickly apologized.

“Get away from me!”

“I said I was sorry...”

Embarrassed, Jesse backed away from the woman who looked vaguely like Ivor. “Well, that worked out real nice,” sighed Nikki. Before Jesse could throw back a retort, he heard Reuben give out an alarmed squeal before being cut off abruptly.

“Reuben? Where’d you run off to?” he called out. No reply.

“Get your pork chops here! Fresh off the bone!” a nearby butcher called. Heart sinking fast, Jesse speed-walked towards the booth. “Nothing sticks to your ribs like a juicy pork chop!” the butcher said, plopping Reuben onto the table, and raising his stone axe. Jesse froze in horror.

“Reuben!”

Nikki’s POV

Nikki’s pulse sped. She couldn’t let Reuben become stall food! She ran towards the stall as Jesse called out his pig’s name.

“What’s the big idea? I’m trying to run a business here!” the butcher grunted rudely.

“That’s my pig! You kidnapped my pig!” Jesse insisted.

“Well, I don’t know what you’re talking about, chief,” the butcher shot back. “I found this pig wandering all alone in the streets,”

“Please, he’s our friend!”



"More his than mine, really," Nikki thought to herself, but now wasn't the time to say it out loud.

"To me, he's inventory. I don't have time for this!"

The butcher rose his axe, ready to strike. Just then, a dark black bat popped out of the ceiling of the booth, screeching loudly. Startled, the butcher threw his axe into the air. It flew up high, lingered a few moments, then came crashing down, the flat side bashing square on his head. "Otis has an ouchie..." he moaned, before hitting his chin on the table, and slithering down, out cold. Nikki was astonished. But also impressed. That was one smart little bat! But where did he come from?

Reuben hopped down from the table, and Jesse picked him up. "Wow! Lucky that bat came when it did, or Reuben would've been toast! Literally!" Jesse commented.

"He's so cool!" Nikki gushed. She stuck out her arm and the bat landed on it, facing her. Nikki was amazed even more: this bat wasn't just black instead of brown; he had purple eyes! It was an ender bat!



"Holy crap! That thing's Herobrine spawn!" Jesse yelled in surprise. "Get him off right now!"

"What?! No!" Nikki countered. "He's so cute! And he would've attacked by now if he was evil." She scratched the bat behind the ears, which he seemed to like. He flew in circles around her head, causing a soft breeze to blow around

her face. It felt nice after sweating half her body water out over Reuben.

"Whatever. He'll leave on his own," Jesse predicted as he walked off in another direction. Nikki followed, half-hoping the ender bat would too. And he darn well did.

"I think I'll give you a name: Zephyr," Nikki decided as the bat rested on her shoulder again. "Because I have a feeling we're gonna be together for a while." The bat let out a happy squeak as if he agreed.

Olivia's POV

Olivia stared up at the chicken machine. She couldn't get what Axel found so interesting about it. Maybe he understood something about it she didn't. He COULD be clever at times, despite his dense personality. She felt a tap on her shoulder.

"Axel?" she thought, turning around. Jesse was standing there, along with Reuben and Nikki.
"Rats."

"Remember that thing we had to go do with Petra?" Jesse said, reminding her of the infamous "thing" he spoke of with Petra. "Long story short, we met up with this guy, who cheated me and Petra on a deal, and now we're trying to catch him. You in?"

"Oh, I'm in all right," she agreed. She was happy to be a part of the excitement for once. Only now did she notice the bat on Nikki's shoulder. But what a bat it was! It was not only black instead of brown, but it had purple eyes as well! It almost looked like...it was an Ender species?
"Hey, Nikki, who's your new friend?" she asked.

"Oh, him? This is Zephyr. He saved Reuben from getting chopped by a butcher," Nikki explained.
"Isn't he cute?"

"Wha--?! Nik, I told you to get rid of him!" Jesse scolded.

"I don't think I could even if I wanted to! He won't stop following me around!"

"Well, why?!"

Nikki only shrugged her shoulders. "How am I supposed to know?" That's when Zephyr flew off Nikki's shoulder, and hid under Olivia's helmet.

"Hey, what--" instinctively, Olivia lifted her helmet, and Zephyr flapped free, squeaking loudly, flying circles around Nikki.



“Okay, that thing has lost its mind,” Jesse said, confused.

“No, he must be trying to tell us something,” Olivia theorized. “Nikki, I think you must have freed him somehow!”

“The pet booth...of course!” Nikki realized. “When Jesse pulled me over, I must have grazed his cage or something!”

Zephyr nodded his tiny head vigorously. He landed on Nikki’s head this time, tired from his romp, and blanketed himself with her ponytail.

“Even if that’s true, we can’t just keep a wild animal around,” Jesse protested.

“We kept Reuben. And you,”

“Oh, very amusing! Mom and Dad gave us Reuben as a pet! HE just showed up!”

“Jesse, you owe him Reuben’s life, from what I’ve heard!” Olivia found herself defending Nikki. “Surely you can’t deny that!”

And Jesse couldn’t. Sighing reluctantly, he turned to his little sister, and grinned. “Alright, you win. Welcome to the gang, Zephyr.” The bat let out another happy squeak and flittered off Nikki’s head to briefly lick Jesse’s face, then return to his previous spot.

“Nikki was right,” Olivia thought privately. “He IS cute.”

Petra's POV

"Did you see him anywhere?" Petra asked Jesse as she and Axel ran up to Jesse, Olivia, and Nikki.

"I thought I saw him, but it was just a false alarm," Jesse reported. Petra's eye caught a strange bat on Nikki's head as he said this.

"Uh, Nikki, where--" she began, but Nikki held a hand up to stop here.

"It's a long story, but—hey, there he is!" she cried, pointing at the shady dealer, who was heading for the hall. "Let's get after him!" Nikki said, about to run towards the hall, but Petra caught the back of her gray hoodie before she could make a move.

"Whoa there, half-pint. We need to get past that usher to follow him," she told her, pointing to a long-haired blonde man with khaki pants and a blue shirt. Wasting no time, the whole group ran up to him.

"So, yeah, hey," Jesse greeted awkwardly.

"What would it take to get us inside tonight?" Petra said, a bit more smoothly.

"Uh, tickets?" the usher answered, chuckling at his own horrible joke.



"This might sound crazy, but we're on a really important mission," Jesse said, getting a bit desperate.

"Well, then I hope your mission came along with tickets, cuz' otherwise..."

A chicken flapped by, terrifying the usher, but Petra was too disappointed to notice. "We gotta do something!" she told her friends.

"Like what? The show has been sold out for hours!" Olivia reminded her.

"I could bust right through!" Axel suggested. "I just need a little wind-up room..."

"You are NOT punching anyone," Jesse said sternly. "We need a distraction."

"That's...exactly what we need to do!" Nikki blurted.

"What?! No! We can't just--"

"Not the usher, you blockhead! We can punch that pane of glass on the chicken machine and free all those chickens up there!"

"How'd you figure THAT out?!"

"I had some help..." Nikki said, beaming up at Zephyr, who had flown up to the glass dome of chickens and tapped the pane with his head.

"*Clever little fella...*" Petra had to admit, but she wasn't going to obsess over it now.

"But you'd have to go all the way up there! And Zephyr isn't strong enough to break it!" Olivia said.

"Look around. There must be a way up there," Nikki encouraged. Petra hoped to hell she was right, because she wasn't about to let Ivor get away with this.

Nikki's POV

Determined to find a way up to the glass pane, Nikki started searching around. She didn't find anything helpful at first, but then she saw a slime booth. A man was performing a demo, showing off the common slime block's bounciness. Maybe bouncy enough to get up there! She eagerly walked to the slime booth, but felt uneasy when she saw who ran it. It was the woman Jesse had mistaken for Ivor.

"Oh, hey, we meet again...heh..." she swallowed uncomfortably at her cold stare. Zephyr lowered his head, trying to stay out of sight. "One slime block, please."

“We don’t give out slime blocks here. Just slime balls.” For someone who reacted so fiercely to a mistake, she sure covered up her anger well. The slime vendor spoke as if she never saw her before. “We’ve got a limited supply today, so we’re only giving out two per customer,” she went on. “You **COULD** craft your own slime block if you had nine, though.”

“I’m sorry about before,” Jesse apologized, walking up next to Nikki. She hoped he could butter her up into a better attitude. “I honestly thought you were someone else.”

“Apology accepted,” she replied blankly.

“A round of slime balls for everyone, please,” Axel said, approaching with the girls behind him. Nikki thought it would really be that easy, but when it was her turn, she didn’t get any.

“Hey, what about me?” she asked.

“Children under 18 can’t buy anything on their own at EnderCon,”

“Agh! Curse you, tininess!”

Jesse sensed a problem. “Wait, if Nikki can’t buy her own slime, we only have eight. We need nine to make a block.”

“Okay,” Nikki said, “See if you can find one more ball.” She was impressed with how easily she was leading their group, despite being so young. But anyways, they needed one more ball. But where could they find one? Zephyr flew off her head and high into the air to get a birds-eye view. Then, he took a nose dive towards Lukas; the Ocelot was leaning by a crafting stall—*and he had a slime ball*. With a tad of relief inside her, Nikki sauntered nonchalantly over to Lukas.

Lukas’ POV

Lukas casually flipped his slime ball, a little bored, but happy that he had made amends with Jesse and his sister. But would Axel and Olivia accept him too?

As he was thinking this, he saw Nikki walk up to him. “*What now?*” he wondered.

“Hey, Lukas, can you do me a favor?”



"Anything's possible,"

"I need slime balls; I swear I have a really good explanation--"

"Nikki! Lukas!"

Lukas turned towards the new voice that was Petra. Olivia, Jesse, and Axel were right behind. What could they be up to?

"Whatever you guys are doing, count me in," Lukas declared as he held out the slime ball to Jesse.

"Thanks, Lukas," Petra said gratefully. To Jesse, she said, "Told you he could come in handy."

"Aw, this guy isn't actually cool, is he?" whined Axel.

"Remains to be seen," Olivia huffed, displeased with being allied with Lukas. This bothered him, but he tried not to show it.

"Be fair, you guys," Nikki cut in, standing up for Lukas. "As far as I've seen, he hasn't done squat to put you down." Lukas turned to give his thanks, but it caught in his throat when he saw a tiny black bat with purple eyes land on Nikki's head.

"Nikki, you got a little something riiiiiiiiiiiiight..." Lukas said, trying to direct her to the bat.

"Oh, don't mind Zephyr. He's one of us now. He saved Reuben from a butcher earlier," Nikki explained.

"Is that where he came from?" Petra asked, who had been listening. "That's pretty sweet. Lucky Jesse let you keep him." Lukas could have sworn before Jesse turned back to the crafting table, he was blushing.

"Ta-da! One slime block," Jesse announced, finishing it. "Gross."

"I'll take that," Olivia said, taking the block off the stand. "Riiiiiiiiiiiiight...there," she placed the slippery block in between the crafting booth and the chicken machine. Lukas hoped this plan of theirs would work.

Jesse's POV

"It's all you now, Jesse," Axel declared.

"Give me a boost," he said. Axel knelt down so Jesse could climb atop his back and get to the crafting stall's roof. He steadied himself for the jump, then ran to the edge. As soon as he leapt, everything went in slow-motion. He imagined every move he would make, each muscle to tone in preparation for it. But as he neared the ground, he couldn't help but flick his head to the left, where his friends were watching. He sought out one in particular: Petra. Sensing a chance to impress her further, he waved. To his delight, she waved back. Jesse lost concentration, and everything sped back up all too fast for him to react.

"Whoa, whoa, whoa, ahhhhhhhhhh!" he yelped, bouncing on his stomach instead of his foot, and smashing his head on the pane. It still broke, and chickens swarmed free, but Jesse had a major headache.

The man running the machine noticed the chickens streaming out of the crack. "My poultry! My precious poultry!" he wailed. The usher saw too, and tried to make a run for it.

"Keep your eyes closed! They will peck out your eyes!" he advised the panicking crowd. A chicken knocked him down, and more crashed down on him in a wave.

"Nice!" Petra laughed, sticking out a hand for Jesse to take. "Never seen glass broken that way!"

Heating up like never before, Jesse took her hand and ran for the hall. "*Smooth, Jesse,*" he rebuked himself. "*As sandpaper!*"

Wooooooooow, Jesse. Real classy. And welcome Zeph! You all can find out more about him in the MC:SM FanFic Wikia. It might (repeat, MIGHT) contain spoilers. So be careful! Uh...not sure what to say now. So, bye!

Chapter 6: Wither We Like It or Not

Oh, look, my first half-decent title. How'd I do? Too cheesy? Forced? XD IDEK anymore bruh

Petra's POV

That was the funniest thing Petra had ever seen, Jesse flopping on his stomach and smashing the glass pane with his head like that. She was afraid she had distracted him by waving back, but at least he wasn't hurt. She made it up to him by helping him up. Jesse looked red in the face as he got up and quickly dashed away. Was he angry? Or embarrassed? Petra wished she could tell.

The group ran inside the hall, but they didn't see Ivor, only a few early arrivals. "Where'd he go?" Petra wondered aloud.

"There! Through that door!" Jesse alerted the others, pointing to an oak door, which was a crack open.

"What do we do once we catch him?" Lukas wanted to know as everyone was at the door.

"Whatever we have to," Jesse stated blatantly.

"You're way more intense than I gave you credit for, Jesse," Lukas complimented, echoing Petra's own thoughts.

Everyone streamed in, Jesse and Petra leading them. Nikki collided with the door frame twice before entering. That black eye sure was affecting her. As they walked down the steps, Petra tapped Jesse's shoulder, wanting to voice some of her thoughts. "Jesse?"



“Hmm?”

“Thanks for doing this. You’re a great friend,”

“Oh. Well, I...I’d do anything for you. I mean, that’s not because I like you or anything—I mean I DO like you, but I don’t love you—Wait, no, that’s not what I--”

“Are you TRYING to make him hear us?” Nikki fiercely hissed lowly back at her brother. “Shut up!”

“Sorry...” Jesse whispered back shyly. For a brief moment, he and Petra locked eyes, but she looked away, feeling awkward for catching his gaze. Why did she always act so wary around him? That wasn’t like her at all. What was it about Jesse that she found so...intriguing?

Nikki’s POV

Nikki peered around the stone brick wall at the end of the staircase. Her friends peeped right behind her. Zephyr flapped around the odd lab they saw behind it, then squeaked at Nikki from a bookshelf.

“Well, thank you, Captain Obvious!” she replied sarcastically. “He must’ve gone out another way.”

“Can you even understand what he says?” Jesse inquired.

"Visualize him as the Reuben to my Jesse. It makes it easier to answer that question yourself," she said, reminding him of how he seemed to understand every oink that came out of the piglet.

"I'll bet you anything I'll find my wither skull here," Petra said.

"And if we find anything else, it's finders-keepers, right?" Axel asked hopefully.

"Axel, that's not what we're here to do,"

"Jesse DID say do whatever we have to..." Nikki added, revenge a tempting thought.

"And if this guy's not here, what we have to do is steal, right?" Axel clearly wanted to take something.

"I don't want to stoop to his level," Petra said.

"Let's just find the skull," Jesse agreed.

"No one ever lets me have any fun," Axel complained, walking off.

"The faster we find the skull, the faster we can get the heck out of here," Jesse put in. He obviously didn't like this basement any more than Nikki did. Zephyr landed back on her shoulder, shivering at the enderman's head mounted on an armor stand nearby.

"Don't worry," Nikki comforted. "I don't think he even knows ender bats exist." She deeply craved the confidence her words held.

Jesse's POV

The gang spread out to search different areas of the basement to find the skull. Jesse walked down a short aisle of books, and found Petra at the end, digging around in a large chest.

"Oh, hello," she grinned, pulling out a golden sword. She gave it a test swing, which Jesse stood clear of. "Too heavy. And too soft."

"But super-flashy!" said Nikki from the next row in a singsong voice.



"Yeah, I don't think this guy does much fighting," Petra agreed. "But I DID say we shouldn't steal anything..."

"Say something nice to her!" Nikki whispered through the row to Jesse.

"Like what?" he whispered back.

"Something flattering, like 'gold looks good on you,'"

"Okay..." turning to Petra, Jesse spoke up. "Gold looks good on me." He was proud of himself for speaking so clearly.

"Um...yeah, I guess it's your color..." Petra answered, puzzled.

"No, you buffoon!" Nikki hissed. "On HER. Gold looks good on HER."

"Oh! I meant you. Gold looks good on YOU. I mean, gold is a nice color for me, but you look better with it. Not that yourself alone isn't nice-looking, but—what I'm trying to say is, you should keep it." Jesse stuttered.

"You know what? You're right," Petra sheathed the sword. "It might come in handy. And it IS super-flashy."

"Called it!" Nikki piped up.

Axel's POV

Axel stared longingly at the potion bottles above him. He wanted more than anything to snatch one and pocket it for himself. Then he saw a fancy potion standing on a pedestal.

"Find anything?" Nikki asked him as she walked up.

"You're not going to believe this, but I swear I had a dream about this," he told her, looking at the potion.

"You're right. I don't believe you," Nikki said, but he ignored the stinging statement, and reached for the potion.

"Okay, I know this is a big step, but I'd be honored if you came home with me," he said to the potion.

"I feel like that's something you should say to Olivia..." Nikki murmured, causing Axel to blush, which was something he rarely did. "Come on, man. Go make yourself useful and go find that skull," Nikki ordered.

"I am..." he said, hardly listening anymore as he took the potion.

"Uh, no, you're doing the exact opposite of what I asked you. There's no way he won't notice his fancy potion is missing!"

"A good thief always covers his tracks," Axel said, trying to be all teacher-like towards Nikki. He took a random bottle which liquid was the same color as the fancy one, and placed it on the pedestal. "Fixed it!" he declared in satisfaction.

Olivia's POV

Olivia gazed up at the tall bookcase wall. She had a feeling it stood out somehow. Then, without warning, it slid down. She later discovered that Nikki had flicked down a lever to activate the hidden wall. Behind it was the oddest thing she'd ever seen. It was a t-shape of some weird blocks.



"What the hell is all of this stuff?" Jesse questioned as he came forward with the others.

"Soul sand. It was everywhere in the Nether," Petra answered.

“What about that block in the middle?” Nikki pointed to the odd thing in the center of the build. Olivia had never seen anything like it before. Maybe if she just got a closer look...

“Don’t touch that, Olivia!” Jesse suddenly said.

“I was just curious,” she said apologetically.

“Don’t forget what we’re here for, find that skull,”

Nodding once, Olivia stepped back, a safe distance from the weird block. Jesse then stepped forwards and opened a large chest. She saw his pupils dilate as he saw what was inside.

“So, good news, weird news. I found the skull, but...” Inching up behind him, she became shocked too once she saw the contents. There were three skulls in there!

Lukas’ POV

“What the hell?” Lukas heard Petra mutter. “Why’d I risk my neck for that skull if he’s got two of them already?”



“There’s got to be something more going on here,” Nikki said darkly. “Something we just don’t see.”

“Oh, Notch...” Lukas gasped as he realized what this was. Soul sand? Three wither skulls? Ivor was planning something more malicious than cheating on a deal.

“I know what he’s up to. Soul sand, plus three wither skulls—that’s the recipe for a Wither!”

“A Wither?” Olivia sounded scared. “But that’s--”

“One of the worst monsters there is,” Lukas finished for her.

“We came here to find the skull, well, we found it,” Jesse said.

“Maybe we should just grab it, and get out of here, while we still can,” Petra advised.

Just then, they heard the creak of an oak door. Lukas whipped his head around towards the noise, heart beating faster. “Uh, guys?” he whimpered.

“Scatter!” Petra mouthed, and everyone ran off in different directions. Zephyr pulled the lever to reclose the bookcase before hanging upside down on a black wool block and shutting his eyes. Lukas jumped inside a chest and saw no more as he closed the lid.

Jesse’s POV

Jesse jumped in between a chest and a bookshelf as Ivor entered his basement. He seemed to be practicing something. “‘Don’t you recognize me?!’—Or wait... ‘Surprised to see me?!’—No, that’s not good... ‘Thought you were rid of me, didn’t you?!’—That’s better...”

“*Egomaniac...*” he thought to himself. Ivor passed Axel, who was squeezed in between a wall and some bookshelves, and Reuben, who was up on the potion shelves. Ivor turned his head on the shelves, but Reuben was no longer there, to Jesse’s relief, but hidden behind the pedestal. Suddenly, he heard the clinking of a bottle hitting the floor. Terrified, he sank back down, thinking that HE had knocked something over, but Ivor’s head didn’t turn in his direction. It turned in Olivia’s.

“What was that? Who’s there?” Ivor called out. He snuck around, trying to seek the person. He ran over to Olivia’s hiding place, which was now empty. She was hidden behind a bookshelf. But Ivor was creeping closer, and she wouldn’t be hidden long.

Just as Ivor was about to round the corner, Jesse heard someone call out. “Up here, jerk!” Nikki snapped. When Ivor tipped up his neck, Nikki let go of the glowstone lamp she’d been hanging on and flattened Ivor, trapping him.



“*Oof!* What are you doing here? What did you see?” Ivor grunted.

“Leave her alone!” Petra ran out of her hiding place.

“Yeah, back off, pal,” Axel said, also revealing himself. Seeing this as a signal, Jesse pounced out too.

“You three?!” Ivor growled, recognizing Jesse, Petra, and Nikki. “Did you follow me here?!”

“You thought you could just screw us over and get away with it, didn’t you?” Petra shot back.

“What do you mean? I have what I want and you got exactly what you deserved,”

“*What he wanted...*” Jesse was reminded of what they discovered down here.

“We know what you’re up to,” he confronted. “Soul sand, and three wither skulls? You’re building a Wither!”

“Hmph! Smarter than you look,” Ivor scoffed.

“Hey! No one gets to talk to my brother that way,” Nikki warned. “Now shut up, or else.”

“Or else what? What could a child like you do to a man like me?”

“For real? Why does everyone--”

Nikki never finished her sentence before Ivor bucked her off, smashing her into a wall. “Enough! You’ve wasted too much of my time already!” He made a run for it, and, once he had helped his sister up, Jesse raced after Ivor along with his friends too. Once they caught up, Ivor was standing over an iron t-block with a pumpkin in his hands.

“If you won’t leave of your own volition, I’ll happily remove you myself!” he said, placing the pumpkin at the top of the t-shape and spawning an iron golem. “Show our friends the door, will you?” he ordered the golem, which lumbered towards our heroes and swung a heavy arm. Before Jesse could duck, the golem planted a good clout on his head, sending shockwaves through his brain. His pupils wobbled in circles before he could see straight again.



Just as the golem raised its arm to attack again, something small and black struck its head with a glancing blow. Zephyr! The ender bat was battering the huge mob with all he had, determined to distract it. The golem forgot about the group and swung high at Zephyr. With the golem successfully distracted, Jesse and the others made a break for the exit.

Back on the surface, the keynote had started, and Gabriel was talking to the ecstatic crowd. Had things gone normally, Jesse would have been excited to see him. But now wasn’t the time for that. “Everyone okay?” he asked. Everyone nodded agreement.

“Uh...guys?” Olivia gulped. “Where’s Lukas?”

“I thought he was right behind me,” Jesse swore.

“Wait a sec—Zephyr’s not here either!” Axel realized.

“They must still be down there!” Nikki’s head whipped around to face the basement door.

“Ivor’s got all the ingredients to build a Wither down there,” Petra reminded everyone. “If he were to unleash it on this crowd of people—we have to act fast.”

"It just so happens that the greatest warrior of all time is in the building," Olivia pointed out. "We've got to warn him about this!"

"But Lukas and Zephyr need help!" Nikki protested. Jesse could understand her worry, but they needed to get Gabriel so he could save him. His heart froze as she continued. "Listen, I'll get them. You guys warn Gabriel and help us the best you can."

"You can't go down there!" Axel gasped. "That golem will tear you to pieces!"

"Well, that golem will tear Lukas and Zephyr to pieces if one of us doesn't save them!"

"Lukas is tough. Probably tough enough to hold out a bit longer," even Petra was trying to change Nikki's mind. "And Zephyr seems like he knows a thing or two." Jesse wanted Nikki safe, but she was right. Zephyr and Lukas needed help ASAP, and they needed to get Gabriel together at the same time. This was the only way.

"Are you sure you can do this?" Jesse asked her. Nikki's face brightened as if she took that as a yes.

"You bet I can. That golem's got nothing on me," she boasted.

"...O...Okay...go. But be safe down there,"

"I will be,"

Nodding her head at her brother once, she turned and dived back inside the basement, Jesse's concern for her rising more than ever.

"Notch, protect her..." he prayed silently.

Nikki's POV

Nikki tiptoed quietly down the stairs. She ran wool-footed inside the lab and ducked behind a bookshelf. "Lukas?" she whispered. "Can you hear me? Even though I'm whispering?"



"Nikki?" she heard a reply. It was Lukas, still hiding in his chest. "Is that you whispering super-loudly?" Just as soon as he popped out, he ducked his head back in. After hearing a metallic groan, Nikki soon figured out why. The golem was right behind her!

The living daylight's scared out of her, Nikki dodged a blow, rather expertly, but was trapped against a wall. The golem rose his fist, and Nikki saw, clenched in the other one, Zephyr was held prisoner!

"Hey!" Lukas called out briefly. The golem turned towards his voice, and Nikki ducked behind a bookshelf out of sight. Seeing nothing more, the golem continued its lumbering.

"Thanks," Nikki gasped gratefully. "You alright?"

"Eh, I've been comfier,"

"Well, hang on a moment. I'm going to distract it,"

Quickly but quietly, Nikki swept the nearest potion off the bookshelf she was hiding behind. She chucked it at the golem, and it knocked it off its feet, freeing Zephyr, who flew out of reach. While it tried to get up, Nikki ordered Lukas to run. He sprang from the chest like a freed bird and went for the exit. Nikki was about to follow when the golem, up on its feet, started to approach her again. Just when Nikki thought it was all over, Zephyr let out a loud screech, hurting the golem's ears and causing it to crumple. She made a beeline after Lukas soon after.

"Thanks, Zephyr!" she said as they continued their escape.

"Okay, Nikki, let's go!" he said as they ran up the stairs. "Thanks for coming back for me. I don't know if anyone would."

"Fun fact about me: I don't leave people behind," she replied modestly.

Lukas' POV

Lukas, Nikki, and Zephyr broke the surface, where they found Axel trying to explain the Wither to Gabriel.

"What'd we miss?" Nikki asked Jesse as she scuttled next to him.

"Only Axel screwing things up the more he talked," he hissed bitterly. "But I don't really care, so long as you're okay."

"I have a question for you, Gabriel," huffed a man from the crowd.

"Excuse me, sir, you'll have to wait your turn," Gabriel said. He had a deep, strong voice.

"Just answer me this—do you really believe anyone can be great?"

"With enough hard work, yes..."

"Was that where I went wrong?! I simply didn't WORK hard enough?!"

He wasn't even out of the crowd yet, and Lukas had a sinking feeling he already knew who it was.

Ivor stepped out of the swarm of people, taking Gabriel by surprise. "Ivor?" he gaped. "Is it really you?"

"You know him?" Jesse said.

"I don't know if I ever really knew him," Gabriel didn't take his eyes off Ivor. "But what I did know, I didn't like."

"The feeling is entirely mutual," Ivor susurrated back at him. "Why don't tell them the real story, Gabriel?!"

"*Real story?*" Lukas wondered. What real story? Whatever it was, Gabriel wouldn't be coughing it up.

"I see time has made you bitter," Gabriel grunted, further spreading Lukas' curiosity.

“And it’s made you an even bigger fool,” Ivor shot back. “Now these people were promised greatness, and I’m ready to deliver!” Ivor then walked back to a laver on the stage.

“Gabriel, you gotta stop him!” Nikki cried out, but there was nothing they could do.



“Nothing built can last forever, Gabriel,” Ivor said as the half-built Wither rose, the final skull in hand. Lukas’ senses froze. This was it.

“Ivor, no!” Gabriel shouted, but it was too late. The Wither spawned, blowing both men off the stage as it did, the odd block in its ribcage. Lukas was terrified. The destruction of the world had begun!

Jesse’s POV

“Creature, attack!” Ivor commanded, waking the Wither. It shot wither skulls everywhere, destroying the hall. People screamed and scattered as the Wither began its rampage. But shooting skulls wasn’t all it did, as Jesse soon saw. It sucked up the damaged parts, and joined with it, making itself bigger.



“Fear not, everyone,” Gabriel said boldly, drawing his diamond sword. “This foul creature is no match for me!” Ivor was in his element. He pointed to Gabriel and told it to attack, which it gladly did. Gabriel jumped and whacked it right on the command block, but it didn’t so much as crack.

“What have you done?” Gabriel panted, as Ivor basked in his glory. Jesse ran forward, shouting Gabriel’s name. “No, stay away!” the aged warrior ordered. “It’s after me, not you!” The Wither charged at them, and they both ducked.

“Look at him!” Ivor jeered. “The mighty Gabriel! He may not be able to stop this creature, but I can!” Facing the monster, he said, “Creature, retreat!” Nothing happened. The monster, now with a mutated head, kept up its block consumption. “Ahem! Creature, retreat!” Still nothing.

“That’s not working!” Nikki yelled, and indeed, it wasn’t. Ivor had lost control of it!

“Uh, no need to be alarmed, my friends,” Ivor assured nervously. “I have an elixir that will destroy this creature.” He pulled out a bottle, and for a moment, Jesse was relieved. But then, he remembered overhearing Axel and Nikki talking about some fancy potion.

“Wait, that potion, is that--” it dawned to him that the potion Ivor held was Axel’s “decoy.”

“Uh-oh,” gulped Axel.

Ivor threw the potion directly at the command block at full force. It didn’t do anything to destroy it. “Impossible...it should have worked...I took such care!”

“The potion...Axel, you gotta throw the real one!” Olivia said.

“But—finders, keepers!” Axel insisted.

“You thieves! You’re ruining everything!”

“Axel, come on!” Olivia urged. Axel hesitated, then slowly pulled out the potion, staring at it longingly.

“Gimme that!” Nikki snapped, taking the potion from her giant friend and chucking it at the Wither’s odd block. Some blocks grew over it, shielding the block.

“It’s protecting itself! Without the command block exposed, the potion is useless! It wasn’t supposed to happen like this!” Ivor wailed. He turned tail and fled.

"Ivor! You coward, come back here!" Gabriel growled, more angry than frightened now. Just then, a purple tractor beam fell over him, starting to lift him up. Olivia lunged for his leg and grabbed it, but struggled to pull him down.

"Jesse, help me!" she called out. Jesse ran over and grabbed Gabriel's other leg. His muscles burned as he fought against the beam's pull. With one last resort tug, Gabriel finally came free.

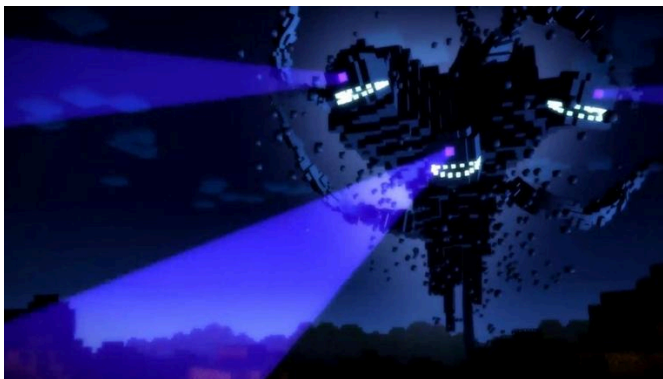
"Thank you," he gasped. 'Ivor was right about one thing: I can't stop that thing. Not on my own." Jesse was stunned. Where was this going? "Will you help me?" Gabriel asked.

"Of course!" Jesse agreed.

"You know it!" Nikki piped up.

Gabriel nodded once, then told everyone to follow him. As they escaped the hall, the building's roof caved in. The Wither emerged, but it wasn't even a Wither anymore. It was a Wither Storm!

People screamed and ran. There were some who were lucky enough to get away, but others were either knocked out by the Storm's new tentacles or sucked up by the tractor beams. As the gang was running, a flock of chickens flapped in Jesse's way. He couldn't get past them! And the Wither Storm was right on top of him! Eager to get away, Jesse shoved the chickens away and continued fleeing. But the tractor beams broke the walkway to EnderCon's main grounds! They took him with it, and Jesse was left to desperately grab a piece of walk that was still floating near the ground.



"Wait! Hey, I'm up here! Somebody help me! GUYS!" Jesse shouted out. Nikki must've heard her brother's call, because she turned and left the group, leapt on a slime block, ran across a stall, then hit the edge of the walkway, out of the tractor beam.

"Here! Get over here, and I'll pull you out!" she said, sticking her arm out to him. Using all his strength, Jesse inched himself forward and grabbed her hand. She then yanked backwards hard, freeing him from the beam, and tossing them roughly back onto the ground. Zephyr squeaked

and grabbed the back of Jesse's shirt, and flapped higher to help him up. He was surprisingly strong for a bat.

On the main grounds of EnderCon, it was even worse. People were streaming away everywhere, and some were pulled into the sky to their doom. Jesse couldn't believe this was happening!

Petra's POV

Petra, Axel, and Olivia hid underneath an awning. It wasn't the best cover, but all they had at the moment.



"This is all my fault!" Petra thought fiercely to herself. If she hadn't handed over that skull, or perhaps listened to Nikki about her suspicions, they could have avoided this whole Armageddon. Then, she spotted Jesse, Nikki, and Lukas a little way off.

"Guys!" she called to them, signaling them to join the others under the awning. They all came and knelt beside her, but before anyone could say a word, the awning broke! The tractor beam was right above it! The others ran for it in a panic, but Petra felt herself being lifted up by the beam. Jesse was the only one who hadn't scattered. He was her only hope!

"Jesse, help me!" she cried, getting more and more fearful as she got farther from the ground. Just then, she felt fingers close around hers and pull her down. THE fingers. Jesse had grabbed her hand with his and used the other to stabilize himself on the ground by gripping a fence post. But the tractor beam remained in that same spot, and Jesse was starting to rise as well.

"I can't hold on!" he yelped. Once she realized what trouble they were in, Petra let out a little scream. Then, the post broke. "Noooooooooooo!" Now this was it. It was all over. Though she didn't know why, Petra felt like it was time to tell Jesse how she had felt all these years.

"Jesse!"

"What?!"

“If...If this is the end...I need to tell you something,”

“What is--”

Mid-sentence, Nikki approached out of nowhere, and grabbed her brother’s leg, pulling them downwards. “You’re not getting away that easily!” she said. But Nikki was too light, and she went upwards too! “Okay, maybe you are,” she gulped. Then Gabriel came and grabbed Nikki’s leg. The power of all three was enough, and they escaped the beam.

As they fell, Jesse flipped Petra underneath him, much to her surprise. Without thinking, she wrapped her arms around him and pushed her head into his chest. Though they hadn’t gotten that high off the ground, it felt like the return to the earth was going even slower than it should. Petra didn’t get it—what was this feeling? Being locked in the arms of...your true love?!

Petra was shocked more than she ever had been in her life. THAT’S why she felt so odd around Jesse—she loved him! The word felt odd rolling around in her brain, but she knew it was true: *she loved Jesse*.



As Petra was going over this, she awkwardly realized that she was flattened on top of Jesse. Blushing hard, she pushed herself up and off of him, and ran, still chewing on what she had discovered.

Nikki's POV

Nikki felt like she could fangirl hard enough to drill right to the middle of Minecraftia if she tried. Jesse and Petra had shared a cute, yet fearsome, little moment. She regrettably had to ruin what could've been the confession she'd been hoping for, but any higher and they would've been dead. There had been no choice.

So now, they were running for their lives as the huge Storm pursued them. Their creeper fireworks machine was destroyed by the beam, but that was the least of Nikki's worries by now.

"Thanks for that just now," Nikki caught some of Petra's words to her brother.

"Yeah, well, now we're eve--" he started, before a flaming wither skull careened in their direction.

"Incoming!" Petra alerted, pushing Jesse out of its path and throwing herself clear. The skull left a crater right next to them, but they were fine. Wishing she had enough breath to breathe a sigh of relief, Nikki resumed her fleeing. She hardly paid attention to where she went. It was all just a mad dash somewhere in the woods, where the trees were alit, a grove of birches and oaks, which divided the group into two smaller groups, and a clearing right before Gabriel's fortress. Dodging the tentacles, wither skulls, and tractor beams, Nikki had to take a flying leap inside to stay alive.

"The inner chamber is built entirely of obsidian," Gabriel explained. "We should be untouchable in there."

"*Should be?*" Nikki couldn't help worrying. The aged warrior flicked a lever that opened a piston door to the inner chamber. There was an unlit Nether portal in the middle.

"Hurry! If you can get through the portal, you'll be safe!" the aged warrior said as he tried to keep a lone tentacle at bay. Axel ran through the portal, but was still seen by his friends,

"Uh, something's not right here..." he mentioned.

"It's not lit!" Olivia cried.

Jesse whipped out the flint and steel he took from the treehouse earlier and lit the portal. It glowed a deep purple, and Olivia ran inside first, flanked by Axel and Reuben, and then Zephyr.

Before anyone else could enter the portal, they heard a scream of pain. Nikki whipped her head around, and froze in terror. Gabriel had been grabbed by the Wither Storm!

“Gabriel!” Jesse shouted, racing back for the warrior. He tried to reach him, but another tentacle crashed through the roof, whacking her brother away. He hit the wall hard, and was showered by obsidian blocks. That struck Nikki’s attention. She raged, and drew her iron sword.

“NO ONE HURTS MY BROTHER LIKE THAT!” she screamed, slashing with all her might. She actually managed to break the skin, not by much, but surely. The tentacle released Gabriel and slithered back to attack someone else.

“Thank you,” gasped the warrior as Nikki helped him up. He gazed back at the citizens, his eyes, for once, looking hopeless. “There are so many of them...I...I can’t save them all.” He turned back to Nikki. “I can’t stop this by myself. We need to find the others.”

Nikki was confused. “Others?” she asked.

“Soren’s been missing for years...but the others...you must seek them out,”

Gabriel pulled out a glowing amulet, about the size of an ender pearl. “Please, take this amulet, and guard it with your life!”

Nikki was bewildered beyond comprehension. The greatest hero of all time was practically asking her to sub for him as a hero herself. “You want me? But I’m just a kid!”

“My child...” Gabriel said, his intense stare locked on her. “You may not look like much, but I saw a fighting spirit shine in you, one that fueled you enough to do what not even my diamond sword could do. You must lead your friends to the Order’s temple, and save the world!”



Hesitantly, Nikki took the amulet from Gabriel. She stared down at it for all of a few seconds, still locked on amazement. “Take it through the portal,” Gabriel instructed. “And then-”
CRASH! Another tentacle busted through the roof, dividing Gabriel and Nikki. That’s when she understood what she needed to do.

"Gabriel's counting on me," she told herself. "The whole world might be."

Jesse's POV

Jesse uncovered himself from the obsidian block pile. Thank Notch the blocks were loose, or he might've been stuck there forever. He drew his stone sword, focused on the swinging tentacle above them. Lukas yelled in fear as it neared him, but Petra whacked it away before it got too close. She turned to him, Nikki, and Lukas as he ran up.

"You three, go through the portal, and meet up with the others. I'll stay here and do whatever I can." Jesse couldn't believe what he was hearing. Petra couldn't sacrifice herself! He needed her, even more than she knew of.

"I'm not leaving without you!" he insisted, but Petra shook her head.

"The gang NEEDS you, Jesse. Go through the portal!"

"Well, I need you! I'm not going anywhere without my best friend!" Jesse countered, sweating when he realized what he could've said if he hadn't caught himself.

"If anything happens, I'll meet you guys at the temple," Petra promised. As the pair was talking, they heard the whoosh of the tractor beam. Gabriel was caught in one, and was being lifted up! Petra ran back to rescue him, but another beam caught her as well! Jesse was in a panic. He



dodged a swaying tentacle, and turned back to Lukas, who ducked to avoid it.

"Lukas!" he called out. He had to help him or they would both be killed! But Lukas didn't so much as make a move. All he did was back away in fear.

"Jesse!" Nikki shouted over to her brother as she ran forward towards Petra and Gabriel. "Get Petra! I'll save

Gab--" she was cut off as a tentacle whapped his sister away. She hit the side of the Nether portal, and slunk to the ground, unconscious. Looks like it was up to Jesse. But who to save?

In a moment of quick thinking, Jesse knew who it had to be. He ran to the right and pulled Petra down. They both clattered to the ground, safe. “Thanks, Jesse!” she said. “Gabriel’s still up there!” And it was true; he was. But he was still in reach!

“Jesse! Go!” Gabriel cried!

“NO!”

Jesse ran left, trying to reach Gabriel before it was too late, but the tentacle blocked his way. He ducked it once, but it smacked him forcefully into the portal. Jesse knocked Lukas in as he went. The last thing Jesse managed to do before he completely vanished into the portal was grab the back of his sister’s gray hoodie, dragging her in along with them.

Oh, look! Disaster! Isn't that just PEACHY?! *sarcasm intensifies* But yeah, that's Chapter 6! Wish our heroes good luck!

Chapter 7: Nether Again

I'll bet you my left hand that at LEAST 5 people have already come up with this title already. But, I was low on ideas (as usual) and I just couldn't think of the right pop.

Lukas' POV

Lukas fell on his back into the dangerous Nether world. He saw Jesse fall out beside him, his little sister on top of him. When they got to their feet, Lukas noticed her come too.

"Where's Petra?" Axel asked the three. Lukas swallowed a lump in his throat, unwilling to tell Axel the terrible truth.

"We did everything we could," he said. *"Or at least... Jesse and Nikki did,"* he added privately.

"What are you saying?" Axel was a bit more worried now.

"It was chaos. There wasn't much we could do," Jesse explained. "Petra is still up there!"

"He's so worried about her..." Lukas thought, his respect for Jesse growing. *"And he's not blaming me. Maybe they deserve the truth."*

"I got scared," he admitted. "Just for a second." Bad choice. Axel had wheeled on him and was approaching threateningly.

"You got scared?" he growled.

"It wasn't my fault!"

"You got scared and it wasn't your fault?!"

"Back off, Axel," Olivia said sternly. Axel grunted, but obeyed.

"Yeah! We need to go back," Nikki agreed, rubbing her sore head and starting for the portal, but Olivia blocked her way.



"No! We just need to wait,"

Nikki stared intensely at Olivia, taking in what she said, as if she was having second thoughts, then she turned to Jesse.

"We should go back," Jesse said, shocking Lukas.

"No moment's thought, no hesitation, no memory of that Storm--" Lukas wondered just how much Jesse was willing to risk over one friend. Even Nikki had taken some time to think over it. Why would Jesse be in such a hurry? Unless...a friend was not what he viewed Petra as?

"She just needs more time," Olivia tried to convince her friend, but Jesse shook his head.

"Petra NEEDS our help. We're going!" he said firmly, apparently not set on changing his mind.

"Yup, he's gone crazy for her," Lukas groaned inwardly. Then, he heard the portal swish silently, revealing that someone was coming through. "Hey, there she is!"

Jesse's POV

Jesse stared intently at the portal, begging that Petra would be the one walking out of it. Someone fell out, but it wasn't Petra. And it certainly wasn't someone they wanted to see. It was Ivor.

"You again," the old man huffed. Before anyone could exchange any harsh words, a Wither Storm tentacle burst through the portal! It whipped about blindly, trying to grab something. It found the portal frame, and squeezed it tight until it broke, then was gone.

Jesse gaped at the broken portal in despair. Everyone knew what that meant. Even if Petra had made it, she wouldn't be able to duck into the Nether after everyone else. She may be doomed! With this in mind, Jesse's gaze went to Ivor, full of hate.

"You ruined everything!" the dealer hissed, dusting himself off. Jesse was so angry, he didn't even move. He just sizzled his hot glare into Ivor. "Don't pretend you don't know, thief! You took my most valuable potion! And ruined what could've been my moment of triumph! What do you say to that?!"

Jesse watched Nikki march up stiffly until she was face-to-face with Ivor. Well, more like face-to-stomach, upon being shorter, but her stare caught his bravely. “Does THIS answer your question?” she snarled. Before Ivor even had a chance to reply, she socked him good in the jaw, causing a tooth to soar out and burn up in a lava pool nearby. At any other time, Jesse would have scolded her. But now, he couldn’t have been more proud.

“More needless violence,” Ivor groaned, still in pain from the blow. “It solves nothing. Learn the lesson now, or you’ll share Gabriel’s fate.”

“Thanks for the useless words of wisdom,” Nikki spat. “Now if you’ll excuse us, we need to go rescue our friend from your crazy pet! No offense.” She quickly added to Zephyr, who sternly glared at her from her shoulder.



“There’s nothing left up there! Nothing but that Wither Storm,”

“Again, we are wasting our time talking to you, and need to go get Petra!”

“The girl! I saw her,”

Jesse’s hard glare went from pinched and angry to open and surprised. “What?” Lukas gasped.

“When I was running for the portal, I passed her,” Ivor said. “She was running in the opposite direction!” He plastered a jeeringly respectful expression on his bearded face. “Such bravery. But of course, there’s a fine line between bravery and stupidity! And your friend has crossed it.”

Jesse couldn’t stand listening to this jerk talk about Petra this way any longer. “She’s going to make it!” he insisted.

“You’re concerned about your friend,” Ivor kept up his mocking tone. “It’s admirable. Almost like she’s not a friend at all...but a love interest?” For once, Jesse didn’t feel his cheeks burn. He cared about whether Petra was safe or not, and didn’t care if anyone noticed something more.

“You’re all going to be dead very soon,” Ivor continued.

“When we’re around you, maybe!” Jesse snapped.

"You don't even realize you're in danger, right now,"

"You don't scare us,"

"That's not even my goal. Through that tunnel is a network of minecarts built by the Order of the Stone. It's your only way out,"

"Much as I hate to admit it--" Nikki sighed. "—he might be right." Jesse was shocked that his little sister was actually trusting this jerk. Worse, he couldn't find the words to disagree with her.

"Bravo for embracing the truth, young one," Ivor sniffed.

"Don't get too comfy. I still don't trust you," Nikki warned. Just then, they all heard the moan of a ghast nearby.

"I would wish you good luck, but luck won't carry you through the Nether," Ivor said. "You have my sympathies." With that, he took out a potion bottle, drank it up, and was gone. No sooner than he had disappeared, a ghast came floating over the horizon, looking ready to shoot.

"Let's get out of here!" Nikki cried.

"Run!" Jesse yelled.

Nikki's POV

Fear and call for energy coursed through Nikki's body as she dashed from the wailing ghast behind them. Zephyr zoomed ahead, squeaking and doing little flips just above a hunk of netherrack. Behind that lump, there was a minecart system! Ivor had been right!

Above the tunnel it drove into, Nikki saw a stained glass replica of the amulet, making her heart plummet. Gabriel had entrusted her with the amulet before being left behind with the Wither Storm. She knew what she had to do, but wasn't entirely sure if she could do it.

Well, there was no time to think about this matter now, because they had a different one on their hands. And that other one was a ghast! It shot a fiery ball, causing everyone to dive in different directions. Once they rose, they made a break for the minecarts. Axel climbed into the

first one, Olivia behind him, Lukas in the next, Reuben wriggling in the one behind, and finally, Jesse and Nikki in the last minecarts.

“Everyone, hang on!” she ordered as the minecarts started to move through the tunnel. The ghast was too big to follow, so it lumbered defeated on the outside.

The minecarts rumbled through the dangerous world, giving Nikki a chance to look around. Petra had taken her here once on her 10th birthday, against Jesse’s own wishes, but she was still amazed by the sights she saw.



“Wow...the Nether,” mumbled Lukas.

“Yeah...” shuddered Olivia. “That is a LOT of lava...and fire...and other things that could burn you to death.”

“Uh, how about fall damage?!” Jesse gulped.

“Yeah, and fall damage, why—oh my Notch!” Olivia yelled mid-sentence. Nikki turned ahead to see what was worrying them, only to see that the tracks dipped dramatically.

“Oh, that’s a drop, that is VERY much a drop!” cried Lukas.

“Here we go!” Jesse said, throwing his hands up.

“Well...when in Rome...” Nikki figured, and threw hers up as well. Axel copied, but Olivia covered her eyes, and Lukas hung on tight as they plummeted down. Zephyr squeaked delightfully as he felt the wind cruise over his slick black ears from atop Nikki’s head as Reuben

squealed in a panic and ducked under the minecart. When they reached flat ground again, they were going at super-speed. There were two overhangs of soul sand in front of them, too low to speed under.

“Duck!” she warned her friends, sinking under the minecart. Zephyr flapped off her head and joined her in the shelter. The first overhang was avoided, then the second, then everyone rose their heads. But they weren’t done yet. Now they faced a giant lava curtain that flowed over the tracks. If they went through those, they’d all be charred to wither skeletons.

“Okay, so...I’m not the only one who can see we’re running out of track, right?” Axel whimpered.

“No!” Lukas shouted back.

“Good!”

Suddenly, Nikki caught sight of a lever in front of her. It protruded from the side of the tracks, and was just in reach. “Zeph! That lever! Quick, buddy!”

Zephyr was in his element. He shot at the switch like an arrow, and flicked it just as the minecarts passed. They stopped abruptly, right in front of the curtain. The tracks the carts had stopped on were being dropped to a lower elevation with pistons.

“Huh, wow,” Jesse sighed in relief. “I thought something bad was going to happen there, but I guess everything’s gonna be--” Before he could finish, the tracks in front suddenly changed direction! It broke Jesse and Nikki off from the team, and the track kept switching, breaking up everyone else as well. There was a lot of clamor and yells, but after it was all over, Jesse, Nikki, and Zephyr were left on a lone track.

“Uh, Axel? Olivia? Reuben? Anybody?” Nikki called. The only response was a squeal of terror. There was a skeleton in the minecart in front of Reuben, shooting at him! Zephyr, noticing his ally in danger, screeched loud, creating a shockwave that hit the skeleton, and made its skull top-heavy. As it was off-balance, Zephyr stuck the final blow, knocking it into the lava lakes below. Reuben oinked gratefully at the ender bat, then jumped into Nikki’s lap.

“And you said he lost his mind,” Nikki couldn’t resist pointing out to her brother.

“Hey, guys, remember when I said everything was going to be just fine before?” Jesse sheepishly said. “I know I was wrong then, but I’m sure this time, everything will be fi—whoa!” He was interrupted when they sped under a ghost, which turned around and pursued them! To make matters worse, two more ghosts heard the commotion and joined the chase. “Duck!” he cried, sheltering in his minecart. As Nikki did the same, she rose her sword, and it deflected the



fireball, hitting the ghost in the middle. Sensing a chance to fight back, Nikki stood up straight and whacked the oncoming fireballs until all the ghosts were reduced to white mist.

“Again, yet another demonstration of your horrible judgement skills!” she wheezed at Jesse breathlessly, not used to fighting in such intense heat.

“Well, ghosts are officially crossed off my to-see list,” Jesse assured her. “Done with ghosts, never need to see them--” the siblings and their pets rounded a corner where another ghost floated, waiting. For a few moments, their mouths hung open. “Don’t you say a word,” Jesse finally hissed before Nikki even had the chance to say something.

The ghost shot a flaming ball at them, knocking Nikki’s minecart off the edge! Reuben jumped to Jesse’s minecart, but Nikki only managed to grab the side. Stomach swaying, Nikki tried to avoid looking down at the lava below. Zephyr grabbed the back of her hoodie, and tried to pull her up, but she was rocking around too much for him to do so. To make the situation more difficult, they were shooting up to a high height, where the tracks were abruptly cut off towards emptiness.

“This is bad, this is bad, this is bad!” Jesse repeated over and over as they got closer and closer to the edge. Finally, they rocketed into the sky, soaring right in front of the ghost like it was E.T. all over again. But they missed the tracks on the other side and took a nosedive towards the lava!

As the siblings screamed their fright, Zephyr’s eyes started glowing an intense purple. They blazed so bright, Nikki had to squint to save herself from being blinded. But what was her pet up to? Zephyr was now vibrating very hardly, but briefly. Just as the tip of the minecarts dipped into the lava, the entire party was gone in a shower of ender particles. Zephyr had just teleported them all!

They reappeared on the tracks, and as luck would have it, right behind the rest of their friends. The little sister and the big brother just sat there, unbelieving of what they just experienced, then allowed their flabbergasted jaws to close when the rest of the gang looked back at them.

"Is...ha...is everyone okay?" Jesse feebly asked. At first, no one spoke. Then Nikki piped up.

"Zephyr's wiped out, but I think he's fine," she murmured. Zephyr, who was wasted after teleporting so many objects at once, had been knocked out and was resting in Nikki's pocket. "But I think I'll be fine if someone pulls me up." She was still dangling from the edge of the minecart, but not for long. Jesse hauled her up and deposited her in the empty minecart in front of them.

"I mean, I'm not dead. I guess that's pretty good," Axel supposed.

"Ditto. Ditto with the not-dead," Olivia agreed.

"I just can't believe that Petra comes down here all the time," Lukas shuddered. "This place is awful."

"Hey, at least we're still alive!" Jesse reminded everyone. "That's more than any other people can say. Their bones are still sizzling away under those lava pools." Lukas looked back at them skeptically.

"Wow. Morbid," he commented.

Axel's POV

Axel never thought he'd be happy to see a floating hunk of netherrack, of all things. But that hunk held the portal home, and out of this hellish world, so he was all for it.

"Can you throw up, like, inside your body?" Jesse groggily asked.

"Uh-huh," Olivia answered, looking a bit green herself. "I know because I just did. About five times."

"Sure hope she's okay..." Axel found himself worrying about Olivia. Thank Notch he was aware enough to keep this to himself. The party of seven climbed the stairs all the way up to another portal.

"All the tracks converge at this point," Olivia identified. "You could probably get anywhere in the world from here."

"Clever observation...she's fine," Axel comforted himself. The party of seven climbed the stairs all the way up to another portal.

"This must lead to the surface. That's our way out!" Nikki beamed gleefully. Impatient to leave the Nether, Axel started for the portal.

"The surface is also where that creature is," Lukas reminded her, causing Axel to stop dead.

"Way to make it more difficult for me, jerk!" he thought furiously. Now he was going to look like a coward if he backed out, which he greatly longed to do, now that the image of the Wither Storm was locked in his mind.

"Thanks for being so brave, Axel," Lukas was mockingly egging him on to make him look dumber; he just knew it.

"Okay, I'm about to go," he declared. "I'm going. I'm going right now." But Axel didn't move a muscle. His mind and body were not in sync at the moment.

Just then, he felt a hand touch his arm. He peeked over curiously, and blushed a bit when he saw it was Olivia whom it belonged to.

"You got this. We'll be right behind you," she coaxed. Her encouraging tone and warming eyes gave Axel all the courage he needed, and much more.



"You're right," he breathed. "Thanks, Liv."

"If it's not love I see, then I'm blind!" Nikki commented.

"Then you need glasses, Nikki," Olivia retorted, backing away. To Axel, she said, "Be safe up there."

"I will be," he promised. Taking a deep breath, he went in. for a moment, it was just purple swirls and ender particles, but then, a clearing with a few nearby trees and a water source, which he stepped into. "Okay, not what I was expecting," he said simply. Then, he heard that old recognizable groan. Before he could turn to it, a zombie jumped him, taking him by surprise and knocking him over! "Yeah, THIS is more like I predicted!" he yelped.

Nice move, Axel. REEEEEAL nice. But whoop-whoop! Olixel in da house! And Nikki strikes again with her amazing shipping powers! XD Anyways, next chapter will come out ASAP. See ya till then!

Chapter 8: Treehouse Trouble, Take 2

Wow, these chapters are coming out like hotcakes! I must have more spare time than I bargained for! That's a good sign, right? I just hope I don't get too busy all over again. I like keeping you guys entertained. Now, for the chapter!

Jesse's POV

After Axel vanished into the portal, Jesse offered to go next. He walked through, seeing the hypnotic swirls curl like flames he couldn't feel, and back out into the Overworld. There, he saw Axel getting massacred by a zombie! Taking quick action, he shoved it off, then drew his stone sword and killed it.

"Oh, man," he gasped. "That was close." Axel stepped out from behind the boulder he'd retreated to, shivering.

"I'm never going first again," he vowed. They pressed on as Nikki, Olivia, Reuben, and Lukas hopped out of the portal.

"Where are we?" asked Lukas.

"In the dark, in the middle of nowhere," Jesse answered.

"If my common sense is working correctly, that's not good," Nikki said. "We need to find that temple ASAP, and I don't see nothing."

"You're right," Lukas agreed. "Ivor said--"

"Oh, 'Ivor said,'" huffed Axel. "Well then maybe this is the temple."



"The Order wouldn't lay down all that track for nothing. It's gotta be here somewhere," Jesse tried to keep his team's spirits up.

“Yeah, that’s what I was thinking,” Lukas was in the same with Jesse.

“Um, I was agreeing with you, so now I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Axel was insistent on cutting Lukas out. Jesse found that rather annoying.

“Well, in case we don’t find it, we need to build a shelter,” Nikki suggested.

“I say we build a treehouse,” Olivia knew Nikki had the right idea.

“Nah, that’ll take too long, and we’ll be exposed while we do it” Axel objected. “We just need a quick and dirty hut.”

“Let’s go with a treehouse. We live in one, after all,” Jesse reminded Axel.

“Yeah, fine,” he sniffed, not entirely in a good mood.

The rest went to work, mining up wood and stone and everything else they needed for their temporary shelter. The group worked in complete silence, so quietly it was almost painful to Jesse. When they were done, they had an oak wood platform with a fire circle in the middle, and a fence post safety rail, and a gazebo-style roof to cover it all.

“If I wake up with a spider on my face, I’m going to expect YOU to deal with it,” Axel demanded.

“Lower your expectations, Axel. I doubt any spider will be hungry enough to make the climb,” snorted Nikki.

“Well, maybe if we built into the tree a little more--” Lukas began, but he went against it. “Never mind. This is fine—it’s good!”

“Looks good, guys,” Jesse tried to compliment everyone, but soon saw that no one was listening.

Lukas' POV

A little while later, they got a fire going. A wolf howled in the distance to the same full moon above them. No one moved or spoke, but sat still. Jesse and Nikki rested in one corner as Axel stood a little way from them, arms crossed, next to Olivia. Lukas sat in a corner all by himself, thinking it would be best if he kept his distance between the group. Axel's hostile glare said it all.



"Oh, man!" Axel finally piped up.

"What?" Olivia asked.

"If I tell you this, you guys have to promise not to freak out,"

"What is it?" Nikki pressed impatiently.

"I have cookies!"

The big guy pulled the treats out of his pocket, overly proud of himself. Lukas didn't find cookies to be news worth freaking out over, but at least they had food for the night.

"One for me..." Axel walked over to Olivia. "One for Olivia..." He padded to Jesse next. "One for Jesse...one for Nikki..."

"Thanks, Axel," said Nikki.

“Yeah, thanks,” Jesse repeated. Lukas stomach rumbled, but he knew Axel wouldn’t provide for him.

“And one for Reuben and Zephyr,” Axel finished, splitting the last one in half and placing them in front of the pig and the bat, who had been laying down together. “Sorry Lukas, I only have five,” Axel said, but he wasn’t fooling anyone. Everyone knew he wouldn’t hand him one even if he had enough. Heck, he gave it to a pair of animals over him!

With this in mind, Lukas watched Nikki get up and hold her cookie out to him. “Take it, Lukas,” she said.



“Oh no, I...I can’t do that,” Lukas protested, not wanting to deprive his young friend of food, but Nikki placed it in his hand.

“I insist,”

“...Thanks, Nikki,”

Lukas ate Nikki’s cookie in a flash, trying not to feel guilty. Oh well. At least he wasn’t hungry anymore.

“That was for you, Nikki, not him,” Axel said, echoing Lukas’s own thoughts.

“Oh, please. I can go without some food for one night,”

“So could he!”

“My cookie, my choice,”

Snorting with resentment, Axel turned away pointedly. Olivia ate her own cookie in silence; Lukas suspected she must have felt awkward doing so.

“If you had to...” she asked suddenly. “Which would you rather fight? A hundred chicken-sized zombies, or ten zombie-sized chickens?”

“Choose wisely,” Nikki advised jokingly, brightening Lukas’s gloomy mood.

"Hehe...uh.... that's a good one...let me think," he chuckled.

"Maybe we should drop the jokes for the night," Jesse sighed. "I mean, there's really nothing to laugh about anymore. Not since that Storm came to be and Petra--" he stopped to swallow painfully. Lukas knew he was recalling escaping into the Nether and leaving her behind. It was a hard memory to think about.

"Fine. Then we should probably get some rest. We need to start looking for the temple as quickly as possible," Lukas said, aiming to take Jesse's mind off his best friend. "Now, my guess is, if we start at the portal, and kind of split up--"

"Whoa, what are you doing?" Axel said.

"Did I do something to you?" Lukas asked, mildly annoyed. "Because it seems you keep getting on my back for no reason."

"We'll figure out in the morning," Jesse said.

"Maybe you're right," Lukas took a patient sigh, understanding that Jesse was trying to make peace. "I AM pretty tired..."

"Jesse said us, not you," Axel flared up hostilely once again.

"Axel, we'll figure it out in the morning," Jesse repeated.

"You're the only one wearing that stupid jacket. Don't tell us what to do," Axel huffed.

That hit Lukas's nerve. 'Take. That. Back," he growled.

"Can't. Wouldn't," Axel said.

"You know what? I get to wear this jacket because I know how to build. But that doesn't mean I don't know how to break things,"

"Your threats don't scare me know that we know how you really are,"

"Jesse, your friend is way out of line," Lukas turned to Jesse for help.

“Let’s just drop it,” Jesse was too tired to take sides, apparently.

“Don’t be like that, Jesse,” Axel looked like he wanted Jesse to pick over the two of them.

“Just drop it,” Jesse said again, but Axel showed no signs of stopping.

“Haven’t you done enough damage for one day? Petra might be dead because of you,” Axel was raising his voice, and prodding his beefy hand on his shoulder.

“You’re taking this too far, Axel,” Olivia said, getting to her feet.



“I don’t have to take this,” Lukas was struggling to keep his voice level at this point. He didn’t like being reminded of his mistake back in the fortress. “Listen, why don’t I just leave, and let you guys hash this out.”

“You can’t leave!” Olivia protested. “It’s dangerous out there!”

“I can take care of myself. It’s what Axel wants, right?”

“Let him leave if he wants to leave,” as expected, Axel didn’t stop him in the slightest. Jesse, however, had different plans.

“You’re not going anywhere,” he declared.

“Oh, yes he is. Even if I have to force him out,”

Lukas immediately knew what was coming next, and tenses his muscles in preparation for a fight. Things were about to get ugly.

“ENOUGH!” Nikki barked, so harshly that everyone was taken aback. “Alright, that’s it! Axel, get your back fat on the ground. NOW,” the 14-year-old hissed. Axel plopped on the floor, his weight propelling Olivia up a few centimeters before she bumped lightly back on the ground. “Lukas, I’m talking to you too. Sit,” Nikki wheeled on Lukas. In no place to argue, Lukas sank back to the floor, shocked by how fierce and dangerous such a small girl could look.

"Listen up, meathead," Nikki turned to Axel again. "Lukas is part of our team now, and I don't care how much you don't like it. If we're ever going to survive, we need to stick together and quit picking fights. We only have one enemy, remember?!" Axel bit his lip, and faced the ground in shame.

"And Lukas--" Nikki wasn't done with him yet. "You need to fill in all those holes in your brain too! I can understand that you feel like an outsider, but I expected you to be more patient about this. I'm Axel's friend as much as I am yours. Anything threatening you say to him, you say to me."



Nikki was on a roll, speaking to everyone now. "Furthermore--" she went on. "We need to forget our past relationships, and focus on the present. We may be the last chance the world has, and if that last chance is a bunch of bickering buffoons, we're all doomed! Get me?"

"Yes, Nikki," Olivia whimpered.

"Uh-huh," Axel gulped.

"Absolutely," Lukas agreed without hesitation.

Nikki suddenly relaxed, her furious face melting away to exhaustion and sadness. She sat heavily next to Jesse. She didn't enjoy talking so severely to her friends, Lukas could see that. This certainly wasn't the same friendly, wisecracking, all-about-fun Nikki he met at EnderCon.

"Zombie-sized chickens," he finally said to Olivia. "That's what I'd fight."

“Why’s that?”

“Because I’m starving,”

As they spoke, thunder rumbled, and rain started to fall. Good thing they had the gazebo roof over their heads.

“Thanks for keeping me around, Jesse,” Lukas mentioned.

“Yeah,”

“And Nikki--” Lukas was cut off when he noticed she had already turned away from him and was fast asleep. Her slumber seemed to signal everyone else to go to bed. Heart heavy with guilt and remorse, Lukas laid down and let sleep take over as well.

Nikki’s POV

Nikki trudged along when dawn broke. She still felt upset about giving her friends a piece of her mind. They must be terrified of her, or worse, angry that she would be so brutal. Even now, she saw Axel flash a look of undisguised hatred back at Lukas, then he sped-walked away up next to Olivia. He sure wasn’t going to get past that anytime soon.

Lukas came to a stop next to Nikki, looking resentful. She held her breath anxiously. What was she going to say to him?

But Lukas only closed his eyes and sighed apologetically. “I’m sorry about before,” he said. “You were right: I shouldn’t have threatened Axel. He’s been your friend way longer than I’ve been. I should’ve just stayed in my place.”



Nikki felt relieved, but also guilty. “Nah, it’s fine,” she said. “And I shouldn’t have lost my temper back there. I could’ve found a gentler way to cool things off.”

“So...we’re cool?”

“Cool beans,” she replied humorously. Grinning, Lukas walked on, seeming happy to have let that out. Nikki felt just the same.

I feel like that ending could've been left on a more interesting note...meh, it's not like I can do much about it, right? Until the next chapter, friends!

Chapter 9: Truth Be Told...

Hmmm...my "catchy pre-chapter statement" meter is low right now...can't seem to think of anything witty... This one was hard to think up of, but I got it in pretty well! Good news for all of us. Maybe? Meh, IDK. Go ahead and read!

Jesse's POV

Jesse trod steadily along the path, the high tension from last night fresh in his mind. Nikki sure got mad last night. But he could tell she had felt bad about doing so. She had even faked sleep to butt herself out; he could tell. Now, she was a little better, but how long would it last?

"Hey! There's something over that way!" Lukas suddenly called out, pointing to something in the distance from atop a hill.

"What is it?" Olivia called back.

"Some kind of...building,"



Jesse's interest was caught. Could the temple of the Order of the Stone be that close? Only one way to find out.

The gang climbed up the vined cliff Lukas stood on to catch the most breathtaking building they had ever seen. True, it was weathered and covered in vines and moss, but it was immense, had gold block details, and a giant emblem of an

amulet. No wonder it was here the Order of the Stone chose to meet. Together, the group pressed on inside, entering a long hallway. If the Order was there, maybe they could help.

Olivia's POV

Olivia's eyes wandered everywhere in the hallway. It may have been old, but it was still beautiful. There were more chiseled stone bricks than she could count, and the glowstone lamps above shimmered like the stars last night.

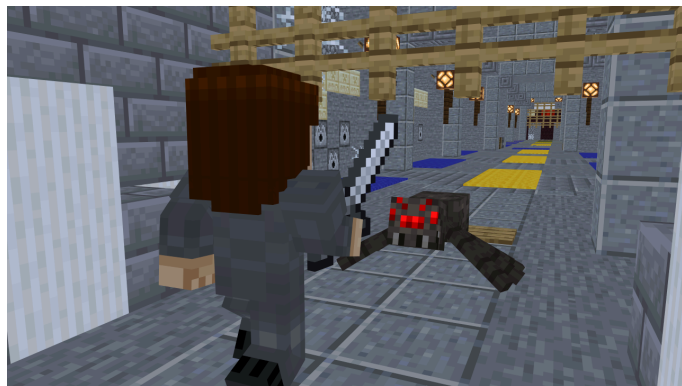
"Isn't it weird how dispenser faces are carved to look like spooky little faces?" Axel randomly mentioned, directing Olivia to several dispensers in the right wall. "What do you dispense, little guy?"

"I get the feeling that we don't really want to find out," she nervously said back. As she spoke, Olivia heard the hiss of a spider.

"Get behind me," Jesse ordered, slightly spreading his arms to defend everyone else. Well, ALMOST everyone else.

"Yeah, like that's ever going to happen," Nikki said sarcastically, drawing her sword and walking ahead.

"Nikki, are you insane?! That was a spider! There's no telling what kind of problems it'll bring!" Olivia protested. Just then, Nikki turned around and faced everyone. She threw her iron sword directly above her and crossed her arms, waiting. Olivia heard a stab, a hiss, and then the whistle of wind. Suddenly, right in front of Nikki, fell a spider, an iron sword in its head. When Nikki pulled it out, the spider disintegrated.



"Problem solved," she said simply, before sheathing her sword and continuing on, leaving everyone dumbfounded, except Jesse, who only muttered "Show-off," and kept moving. Olivia wondered how he was used to this kind of action from her. She wondered, not for the first time, why she wasn't.

Just then, everyone heard a loud creak. Spooked, Reuben raced ahead, and Olivia's instincts told her to run after him. Apparently, so did everyone else's, as they chased after Jesse's pig.

Without even noticing, they ran over a set of pressure plates. A fence post gate closed behind them, blocking off their escape.

“That’s probably not a good sign,” Axel gulped. Then, the dispenser faces powered up. “Aw, come one, dispenser faces! I thought we were friends!” he complained. And then, the faces shot arrows at the gang.

“Run!” Jesse cried. Like Olivia needed someone to tell her that.

She leapt and dodged and rolled and dove. She did anything that would avoid getting her skewered. Panting, she rested her hands on her knees to catch a breath when the others reached the middle of the hallway. But of course, that was a problem, because there were more arrows shooting in front of them as well!

“We’re trapped!” Jesse exclaimed.

“No, duh, genius!” Nikki snapped. “How do we get out?”

“Those dispensers were activated by those pressure plates. If we hit them again, maybe that’ll shut them off,” Lukas predicted.

“There’s a crafting table. Maybe we can build something useful,” Jesse pointed to a crafting table in the corner.

“With what?” Olivia asked. “All our tools and materials are back home!”

“Empty your pockets, guys. Let’s see what we have to work with,” Nikki said.

“I have some sticks from building the shelter last night,” Lukas revealed, pulling the said items out of his pocket.

“I’ve got a flint, but that’s all,” Olivia said, wishing she had brought more to help with this unexpected situation.

“All I have are some feathers from when that chicken machine exploded,” was all Axel had to present.

“I only have one piece of string from the woods,” Nikki took the measly object out.

“Let’s see, I’ve got some flint and steel, a sword—oh! And some string from a spider we fought in the woods earlier,” Jesse said, taking it out.

“So sticks, string, flint, and feathers,” Olivia repeated. What could be made out of it? Jesse walked to the table with the objects and, after a moment’s pause, started placing them. When he lifted his head again, he was standing over a bow and a quiver of arrows.

“Let’s do this,” he said epically, facing the pressure plate. In one shot, the arrow whizzed through the air and pinned the pressure plate. In an instant, the arrows stopped flying. Free at last!

“The Dead Ender’s luck is changing!” Axel declared, walking through the hallway triumphantly. Olivia couldn’t agree more.

Lukas’ POV

After wandering in the hallway for what seemed like forever, Lukas finally saw a library up ahead. It was old and dusty, but that was to be expected after being abandoned for so long.

“Doesn’t this look a lot like Ivor’s creepy basement?” Axel said aloud. Lukas had to agree; the style was definitely built by someone of Ivor’s type. He looked up at the bookshelves, reading their titles when he heard Jesse’s voice, strong and clear.

“The battle was rough. They had spent weeks preparing for their greatest battle yet. These FIVE



friends would give so much to gain their rightful place as FIVE heroes. They would author their own end. They would slay a dragon,” he read aloud from a book on an enchanting table. Lukas was bewildered. Had Jesse read wrong? Or had there actually been five members? And if that was true...could it be? No wonder the library style looked so familiar!

"Ivor was a member of the Order of the Stone!" Olivia gasped.

"Gabriel never said anything about this!" Nikki exclaimed, holding up a picture she had found. It depicted the entire Order with Ivor inside.

"Man, I can't believe you punched a member of the Order of the Stone," Axel gaped at Nikki.

"Hey, member or not, he unleashed this problem on us, and we need to fix it,"

"They lied to us," Olivia muttered back. "They lied to the whole world!"

"Whatever they did, it doesn't matter now," Lukas said, not forgetting why they were here, despite his bafflement. "We need to focus on what matters most."

"He's right. Petra's relying on us," Jesse agreed. Lukas sighed inwardly, feeling a lurch of pity for him. Everyone figured by now that Petra was already lost, but Jesse still clung onto the fact that she could be out there. It was saddening to see, but no one had been willing to tell Jesse the truth.

"Where do these stairs go?" Nikki asked suddenly. Turning his head, Lukas saw Nikki standing at the base of a long set of stairs.

"Only one way to find out," Jesse declared next to her. He began walking up the stairs, the others soon trailing him, wondering what else awaited them in this forgotten place.

Dunno why it was so short, but I suppose it doesn't matter. I'm nearly done! :D! The Book 1 finale is right around the corner! What do you think will happen up there? Will the team stick together? Is Petra still alive? Will theninjakid14 keep the faithful watchers waiting again? All the questions and more will be answered another day! Until then, so long!

Chapter 10: Siblings Together

THE FINALE IS HERE! (It's short, yes, but WHO EVEN CARES?!) WHY AM I STILL SHOUTING?! JUST READ ON!

Jesse's POV

Jesse's head was the first to poke out into the biggest room he'd seen in the Order's temple. The midday morning sun shone brightly off to the east. He could see it quite clearly, for the walls of the room had been demolished. The room was decorated with gold, stone brick, and chiseled stone blocks. At least, that's what Jesse collected from the remaining blocks. But the best part of the entire thing was a huge map of the entire world, which had a pedestal positioned in front of it.

"What happened to the walls?" Axel asked when he arrived.

"More like what happened to this whole place?" Nikki corrected, glancing around at the damaged walls.

"This must've been where they met!" Olivia theorized.

"Okay...so now what?" Lukas wondered aloud.

"Gabriel said that the amulet would point the way," Nikki revealed, pulling the amulet out of her pocket. Jesse and the others gathered around her, and she held it up. For a few awkwardly silent moments, nothing happened. And nothing was going to happen.



"It was a dumb idea anyway," Olivia tried to cheer the team up, though Jesse couldn't see how it would do that.

"Let's look around. We're not done yet," Jesse suggested. That put everyone to work. After a bit of poking around, Jesse came to the pedestal in front of the map. It had an amulet banner on it. Maybe...this was where it was supposed to go?

"Hey, sis?" Jesse called out. "Can I see the amulet for a sec?" Nikki handed it over, confused, until Jesse placed it on the pedestal. A perfect fit, but still nothing happened. It looked like Jesse wasn't done with this puzzle. The final answer had to be somewhere...

Then, Jesse saw the levers and redstone lamp behind the pedestal. He gave them an experimental pull. After pulling them in a certain order, all the lights next to the map were alit, and the redstone lamp flickered to life. But that's not all it did. A light beacon light shot out from it, and connected with the amulet. Its colors shone onto the map in two more beams of light, pointing to specific locations.

"Best. Puzzle solver. Ever," Jesse patted himself on the back.

Nikki's POV

Nikki stared in total bliss as a red and green light flashed over their heads and planted themselves on the map.

"It's absolutely incredible!" Olivia gaped. "How did they build this?"

"It's some sort of tracking system," Jesse realized. "This is what Gabriel wanted us to see!"

"But why?" Lukas wanted to know. Nikki had thought about that herself. She KNEW Gabriel had been trying to tell them something. That's when it hit her. The tracking? The previous story? Gabriel's remembrance of his teammates?

"We've got to find the Order of the Stone," she said aloud.

"But there are only two lights," Axel pointed out. "There are only two members of the Order left?"

"He said Soren was missing," Nikki mentioned.

"That leaves Magnus," Lukas said.

"Or Ellegaard," Olivia added.

"Suit up, you guys," Jesse said. "Let's get the Order back together."

"I'm not going with you guys," Lukas finally said. "I need to work on making this place safe before nightfall."

"Isn't that dangerous?" Jesse asked.

"Someone needs to hold down the fort while you guys are getting the Order. Besides--" Lukas turned to Jesse. "If you really believe Petra's still out there, if she's alive...then I need to be here."

"Back off, pal..." Nikki warned silently. *"There's only one man for Petra, and that's Jesse."* Lukas wouldn't possibly be a threat to their relationship...right? Oh, well. That's not what mattered right now. They needed to reunite the Order.

"But...I'll have a lot of work to do," Lukas confessed. "Maybe...one of you guys could hang back with me?"

"I can do that," Olivia offered, stepping up to Lukas. "As much as I want to see Ellegaard, I think prepping this place is a bit more important."

"Great! Jesse and I will go find Magnus, then!" Axel said, as if the matter was settled.

"Erm...maybe Jesse and I should go," Nikki objected as she picked the amulet back up. She wanted to keep an eye on her brother to make sure he was unharmed. Besides, if Axel stayed here, he and Olivia had a better chance of strengthening their relationship.

"But I'm the number one Magnus fan! I'll get Jesse through the city better," Axel insisted.

"Do you know Jesse as well as I do? I'm his sister, for Notch's sake! I know his what's and what not to's,"

“What does that even mean?”

“It means I’ll be able to watch Jesse without getting too distracted by the surroundings!”

Nikki didn’t have time to argue like this. All she was saying was that Jesse needed her to get to Magnus. And, in all honesty, she needed him too. If that Wither Storm caught him, there would be no forgiving herself.

“Nikki...” Jesse said, kneeling in front of her. “Listen. I know you’re worried about me, but...I’m worried about you too. You need to stay here, where it’s safe. I’ll definitely be fine knowing you’re okay.”

Nikki sighed deeply, but what else could she say? There was no changing his mind, and time was of the essence. To top it off, he had a point. She always did better knowing she was out of danger. But even so...that meant he’d be out of danger, throwing her mind into a tussle of worry.

Before she could reply, Nikki heard a faint growl. The sunlight filtering in the room began to flicker. There, off in the distance, was the Wither Storm, continuing its escapade to eat. Nikki probably would have been tossed out of persuasion had Jesse not said what he did next:



“Trust me on this Nikki. ‘Siblings together, family forever,’ right?”

That stuck her hard. “Siblings together, family forever” was their family’s credo. It meant that near or far, dead or alive, they’d always be related...and together, as it were. With that being said, Nikki knew that Jesse would be

alright.

“Okay...go get Magnus. Just...don’t be a blockhead. For my sake?” she begged.

“Anything for my little sis,” Jesse promised with a smile, closing in for a heartfelt hug. Nikki felt so much like crying. Though she hadn’t ever since their parents died, this moment came very close. She hugged him tight, as if was the last time she would ever do so. When they parted, she

left the amulet in his hand. He looked from down at the amulet to back up to her again in slight surprise.

“If the amulet can track the Order, you’ll need it.” she told him, swallowing the waver in her tone. “Good luck.”

With a nod and a wave, Jesse stood back up and walked to Axel. “Grab your stuff, Axel. We’re going to find Magnus.”

Zephyr flapped up to Nikki’s ear and squeaked to get her attention, asking to see how he could help.

“Alright, little buddy. Go find help,” Nikki ordered, her voice stronger now. “Survivors, un-notified people, whatever. We’ll need all the help we can get.” Nodding his tiny head once, Zephyr zipped into the sky and off into the distance. As Nikki watched him go, she heard the angry growl of the Storm once more, but it didn’t course fear through her body; only steely determination.

“The corruption of Minecraftia has begun,” she thought. “But so have the heroes who will fight back to their very last breath. This is only the start.”

Aaaaaaaaaand, scene! DONE AT LAST! For the time-being, anyways. Wonderful first book everyone! Welp, that's it until Book 2! Stay tuned! Hasta la vista!

Epilogue

What Nikki has said is true: this is only the start of the new war that has been unleashed on their world. Now, her brother and Axel have set out to find a legendary griever. And with the Wither Storm running free, there is peril everywhere. Can our heroes fight the fight and save the day? Will the Order of the Stone be able to combat the Storm? But the most important question of all is...how will our newest hero alter the original story and expand it beyond what we all knew of? Only one thing is for sure:

Everyone will remember that.

About the Author

Hiya! I'm jetrashipper! One part shipper, one part jetra, I don't just ship Jesse and Petra. I ship all SORTS of trash! Lukesse, Olixel, Harvor, Misa, Magnugaard...I could go on! Anyways, I don't just do Wattpad. I also love Deviantart, and the Wiki! Am I a gaming freak? That's one way to put it.

My Interests:

- Gaming
- Listening to Music
- dA
- YouTube
- Animation
- FanFic Writing



My OCs:

- Nikki (MC:SM OC)

(She's my main OC, but there's more on the way!)

Little About Me!:

- I'm currently genderless
- I'M SHIPPING TRASH!
- I'm ALSO known as "theninjakid14"
- Radki, my OC ship, is one of the most popular in the MC:SM fandom!

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